DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 448 888 PS 029 113

AUTHOR	Loucks, Hazel E.; Waggoner, Jan E.
TITLE	Keys to Reengaging Families in the Education of Young Adolescents.
INSTITUTION	National Middle School Association, Columbus, OH.
ISBN	ISBN-1-56090-124-1
PUB DATE	1998-00-00
NOTE	122p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Middle School Association, 4151 Executive Parkway, Suite 300, Westerville, OH 43081; Tel: 800-528-6672 (Toll Free); Tel: 614-895-4730; Fax: 614-895-4750; Web site: http://www.nmsa.org (NMSA Stock Number 1248).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Early Adolescents; *Family Involvement; *Family Role; *Family School Relationship; Middle School Students; Middle Schools; *Parent Participation; Parent Role; Parent School Relationship; Parent Student Relationship; *Parents; Parents as Teachers; Partnerships in Education; School Community Relationship

ABSTRACT

Noting that the involvement of parents and family members in the education of their children at school and in the home is one of the keys to children's success in school, this monograph focuses on ways to include various family members in the education of young adolescents. The monograph is intended as a guide for an effective, comprehensive family involvement program. Following an introduction providing a research-based rationale for family involvement, detailing definitions and key concepts in family involvement, and depicting a multi-faceted family involvement model, the monograph is organized in six sections: (1) "Families as Decision Makers and Advocates"; (2) "Families and Schools as Communicators"; (3) "Families as Learners"; (4) "Families as Teachers and Coaches"; (5) "Families as Supporters, Volunteers, and Audience"; and (6) "Family, School, and Community as Partners." Each section presents the key concept, expected outcomes, and keys to implementation. Also included are self-assessments for the schools, worksheets, surveys, and sample guidelines. Appended are descriptions of six categories of family involvement. (Contains 41 references.) (KB)

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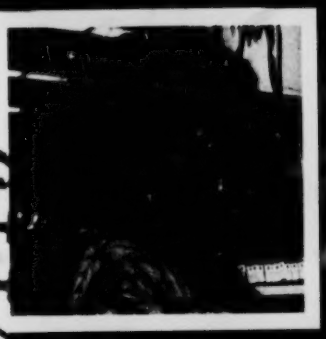
Keys to Reengaging Families in the Education of Young Adolescents

by Hazel E. Loucks
and Jan E. Waggoner



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by
Hazel E. Loucks
and
Jan E. Waggoner

National Middle School Association
Columbus, Ohio

National Middle School Association
~~2600 Corporate Exchange Drive, Suite 370~~
~~Columbus, Ohio 43231~~ 4151 Executive Parkway
Telephone (800) 528-NMSA Suite 300
www.nmsa.org Westerville, OH 43081

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NMSA is a registered servicemark of National Middle School Association.

Printed in the United States of America

Sue Swaim, Executive Director
Jeff Ward, Director of Business Services
John Lounsbury, Senior Editor, Professional Publications
Mary Mitchell, Copy Editor/Designer
Marcia Meade, Senior Publications Representative

ISBN: 1-56090-124-1 NMSA Stock Number: 1248

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Loucks, Hazel E., date

Keys to reengaging families in the education of young adolescents/ by Hazel E. Loucks and Jan E. Waggoner.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p.).

ISBN 1-56090-124-1 (pbk.)

1. Middle school education--Parent participation--United States. 2. Parent-teacher relationships--United States. 3. Home and school--United States. I. Waggoner, Jan E., date. II. Title.

LB1623.L577 1998 98-9944

373.119'2--dc21 CIP

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About the Authors

Dr. Hazel E. Loucks is Higher Education Director, Illinois Education Association/National Education Association and retired Professor of Education Administration and Higher Education, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. She is a frequent consultant for schools across the country and does workshops on a variety of topics including parent involvement. She has written various publications on parent involvement as well as other middle level topics.

Dr. Jan Waggoner is Associate Professor and Coordinator of Elementary and Middle School Programs in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. She has presented workshops on parent involvement at the national, state, and local levels and has written several publications on middle level parent involvement.

Introduction: Why Parent and Family Involvement?

Introduction

The involvement of parents and family members in the education of their children both at school and in the home is supported in the research as one of the real keys to achieving success in schools. This monograph focuses on ways to include various family members, each of whom contributes in a different way to the overall development of his/her children. Throughout the literature *parent involvement* is used interchangeably with *family involvement* and is so used here.

Family involvement is associated with higher levels of student performance, improved behavior, and greater parent and community support for schools (Henderson, 1987). These factors play an especially critical role in the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development of young adolescents. During these critical years, 10-15, students are forming the attitudes and values that will shape their adult lives. They make decisions that affect the quality and quantity of their lives. It is estimated that the future of one in four adolescents or seven million youth is in serious jeopardy because of their vulnerability to the negative consequences of multiple high-risk behaviors such as school failure, substance abuse, and sexual involvement (Carnegie, 1989).

The research also indicates that although all children benefit from their families' involvement in education, children from low-income and minority families tend to show the greatest gain from comprehensive parent and family involvement (Clark, 1988; Henderson, 1988; 1997). By the year 2020, nearly half of all school-aged children will be non-white (Natriello, McDill, & Pallas, 1988).

Turning Points: Preparing American Youth of the 21st Century (1989) identified eight major recommendations that when implemented would improve the educational experiences of middle grade students:

- *Create smaller communities for learning*
- *Teach a core academic program*
- *Ensure success for all students*
- *Empower teachers and administrators to make decisions about the experiences of middle grade students*

- *Staff middle grade schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents*
- *Improve academic performance through fostering the health and fitness of young adolescents*
- *Reengage families in the education of young adolescents*
- *Connect schools with communities*

As one of these seminal recommendations by the Carnegie Council, family involvement is further validated as an integral part of reform for middle level education. The current level of family involvement in middle grades schools is extremely low as indicated by a longitudinal survey being done on eighth graders by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Family involvement, which encompasses a wide variety of areas and holds broad meaning, can be categorized into six main areas with family involved as:

- Decision makers and advocates;
- Communicators;
- Learners;
- Teachers and coaches;
- Supporters, volunteers, and audiences;
- Partners with the community.

Schools are caught in the vortex of changing demands and cannot, by themselves, accomplish the reforms necessary to improve education. Schools cannot educate children alone. Parent involvement in the schools can neither be seen as a quick fix nor a luxury; it is fundamental to a healthy school system (Henderson, 1987). The multiplicity of services that schools are expected to provide to meet the needs of students within their classrooms requires additional financial and human resources.

Although families historically have been involved in education, the extent to which parents and family members view their involvement as appropriate may vary depending on the particular culture or sub-culture. Teachers should acknowledge and show respect for the diversity of families represented in their classrooms. Integrating ways that diverse families can be involved is essential when assisting schools with the development of school and family partnerships. Not all families are comfortable with or have work schedules to accommodate their direct involvement in the classroom. Single parent, blended, and step families will comprise 85% of family structures by the year 2000. Those families need to be included in equally important support roles outside the classroom.

However, planning for expanded participation of these families increases the demands on teachers. Designing collaborative assignments, providing for additional communication, and seeking to include families as learners, teachers, communicators, supporters, decision makers, and partners can take a significant amount of time and thought unless there are guidelines, "parent-friendly" materials, and related resources formatted in usable ways to assist teachers and schools in efforts to include families.

This publication is designed to meet just such a need. It focuses on strategies for engaging families in the education of young adolescents. There are many reproducible sections that may be used as stand-alone handouts, communication enhancers for parent newsletters, supplements for parent-teacher conferences, outlines for PTA/PTO programs, and general information for community organizations. This resource is unique in that it is replete with multiple ideas targeted on specific issues. Unlike many other related publications, *Keys to Reengaging Families in the Education of Young Adolescents* contains both a general discussion of topics and a series of related ideas compressed into one or two-pages, ready to be used as handouts or transparencies. An effort has been made to make the contents time-saving, easily accessible, and practical for teachers, parent coordinators, and individuals serving in related roles.

Thirty years of research shows that when family and community members are directly involved in education, children achieve better grades and higher test scores, have much higher reading comprehension, graduate at higher rates, are more likely to enroll in higher education, and are better behaved.

— William Riley, U.S. Secretary of Education (1996)

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Why Family Involvement?

- Research on effective schools demonstrates the importance of building partnerships between home, school, and community.
- Research strongly supports comprehensive family involvement as one way to improve student gains in personal and academic development (Epstein, 1988; Gordon, 1978).
- National reports on education have addressed the need for families to become more involved in their children's lives and particularly with their children's education. Changes in family lifestyles have increased barriers to family-child communication.
- Studies indicate that family involvement in children's education steadily declines as their children move from elementary school through middle and high school (Epstein, 1986; Epstein & Dauber, 1991).
- Family training is an effective means of informing families of at-risk children about good parenting procedures. As families become more involved, children's interest in school changes and academic achievement improves.
- Reengaging families in the education of young adolescents is one of the eight major recommendations of *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* (1989). Schools need to develop ways to keep families informed, involved in meaningful ways, and supportive of the education of young adolescents.
- Family involvement is mandated by many state and federal programs that address the needs of special learning populations. Middle school students have unique social, emotional, and physical needs that require special parenting skills.
- As parenting skills improve, children will come to school with more positive attitudes about themselves, their abilities, and the school itself. When students come to school ready to take advantage of educational opportunities, school time and energy can be devoted to facilitating learning.
- When teachers actively seek to involve parents and family members on a regular basis, the interaction between parents and children at home also increases (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Johnston, 1990).

15 Research-Based Reasons for Family Involvement

1. Schools can, through policies and actions, reach out to families to help them be involved in the education of their children (Olson, 1990).

2. Involving families in their children's formal education is twice as predictive of academic learning as family socioeconomic status (Walberg, 1984).

3. Family involvement is most beneficial when it is well planned, systematic, long lasting, and when families play many roles (Loucks & Waggoner, 1993).

4. The family, not the school, provides the primary educational environment (Jennings, 1990).

5. Teacher and administrator initiatives and willingness to reach out to families are key factors for effective family involvement (Jennings, 1989).

6 Families whose involvement is actively sought by teachers have more positive attitudes about their children's schools and teachers (Johnston, 1990).

7. Family involvement is an under-utilized resource for the enhancement of student achievement (McInnis, 1989).

8. The benefits are not confined to early childhood or the elementary level; strong effects result from involving families continuously throughout high school (Henderson, 1987; Rubin & Olmsted, 1983).

9. Children from low-income and minority families have the most to gain when schools involve families (Clark, 1988; Henderson, 1987).

10. Families do not have to be formally educated to help (Henderson, 1987; Menacker, 1988).

11. While all forms of family involvement are desirable, home-based family involvement (doing home learning activities coordinated with children's class work and providing enrichment activities) appears to be the most valuable in regard to student achievement. When time is limited, home learning activities are one of the most efficient uses of time (Department of Education, 1986).

12. Students whose teachers involved families in home learning activities made greater gains in reading achievement (Epstein, 1983).

13. Schools need to help families learn how important they are and that teaching their children can be accomplished at night, on weekends and on vacations (Rich, 1987).

14. Regardless of socioeconomic status or ethnic/racial group, families tend to have the same goals and dreams for their children. Families across all groups, see education as a major road by which their children can reach these goals (Lareau, 1987).

15. Family involvement in education helps produce increases in student attendance, decreases in the dropout rate, and improvement of student attitudes and behavior (Rich, 1987; Sattes, 1988).

Definitions and Key Concepts in Family Involvement

The literature makes it clear that for change to take place in schools, administrators and teachers must be provided technical assistance and incentives to incorporate something new in an already crowded schedule. Furthermore, school personnel must consider what they believe about family involvement; for administrators and teachers play a most significant role in the inclusion or exclusion of families in the school. Therefore, *Keys to Reengaging Families in the Education of Young Adolescents* provides a strong component of training for administrators and teachers to

- clarify what they believe about family involvement,
- assess their current family involvement profile, and
- improve their capacity to conduct and initiate family-involvement practices/programs.

Research findings indicate that the following actions must be taken at the school level in order to improve family-school connections and family involvement programs. First, schools must write and adopt a policy that outlines their commitment to family involvement. Second, schools must develop a comprehensive program for family and school partnerships. Last, and most important, the administration and the teachers must make a commitment to emphasize family involvement as a benefit to students and implement their program.

The literature suggests the following types of involvement which, when combined, lead to improved student performance.

Family as decision makers and advocates

The literature and research are not clear on the effects of family involvement in advocacy and governance as they relate to student performance. The literature does however report that the key to success of such programs lies in the attitude and actions of the school administrator and staff. Furthermore, parent training on how to function as a part of a school committee/group is critical to the success of such efforts. In schools where families are involved in governance, higher degrees of all other types of involvement are present.

Family and school as communicators

Research places considerable emphasis on the need for changed attitudes and expectations of school personnel, particularly in their efforts to reach and communicate with all types of families. The school and family must be engaged in frequent, clear, two-way communication.

Family as learners

Families, to be effective, need to be knowledgeable about such things as child development, nutrition, discipline, and other aspects of child rearing. When these skills are lacking, the school can provide educational programs that can enhance family skills in these areas. The school, as learner, must be aware of important information which only the family can provide and must systematically seek such information.

Family as teachers/coaches

The traditional role of the school is that of teacher/coach. However, it is widely recognized that the family is the child's first teacher and the ability of the family to effectively fulfill the teacher/coach role ultimately affects the child's performance in school. Furthermore the family's continued support as the source of reinforcement of the learning process and their continued coaching of skills are important to the child's school successes. Studies indicate that students whose families monitor and show interest in their homework simply perform better in school.

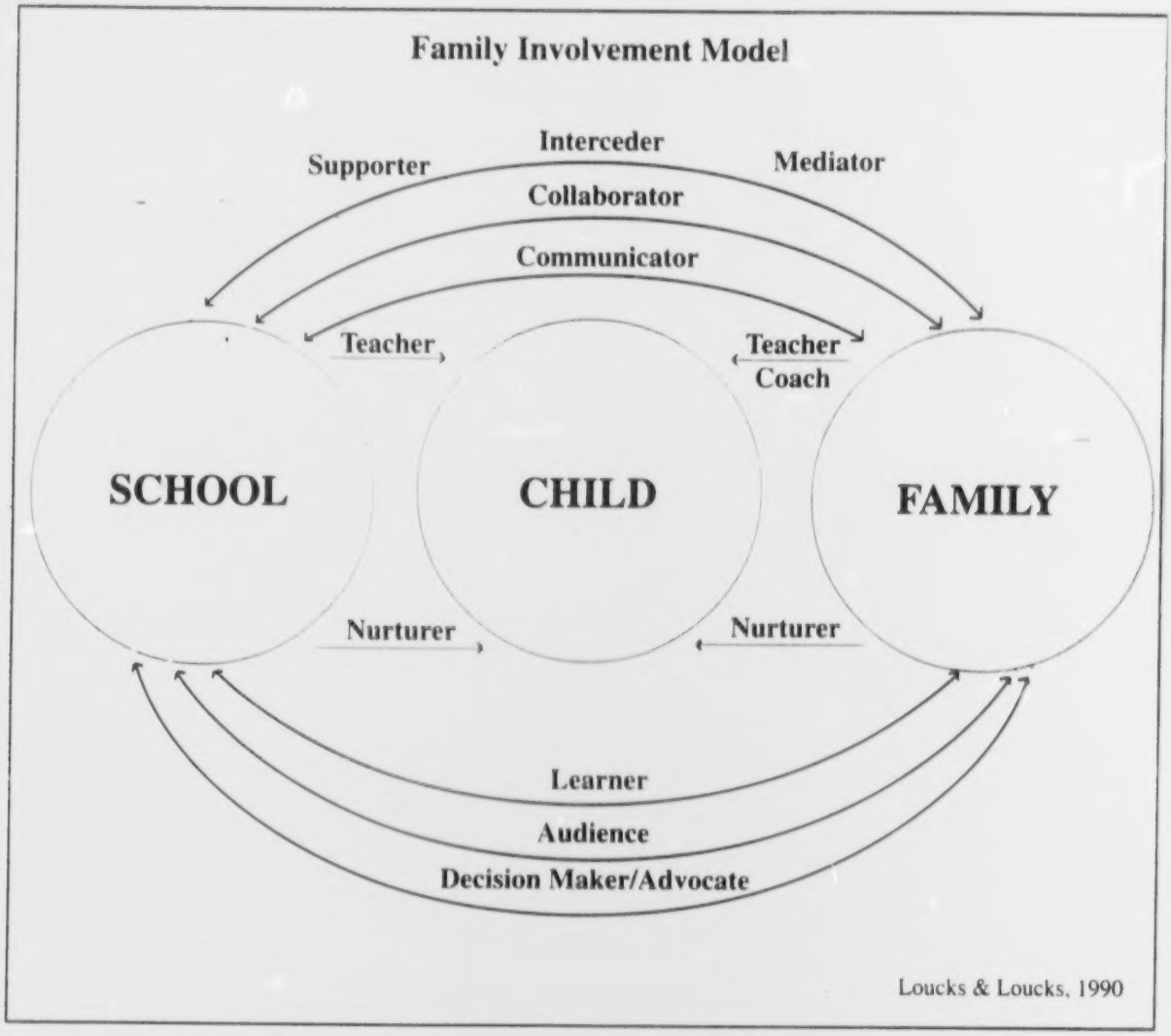
Families as supporters, volunteers and audiences

Families are most frequently involved in these kinds of activities. However, studies show that schools need assistance in involving greater numbers of students which in turn will lead to more family participation.

Family, school, and community as partners

The traditional role of the parent or custodian is that of the care giver's meeting basic needs such as safety, nutrition, and love. Many families and custodians are unable to provide this basic nurturing; therefore, schools must help meet some of these basic needs and assist those who are providing the family role to access agencies that can assist in care giving.

In general, while no one disputes that families should be involved in the educational process, some disagreement occurs over the degree and type of family involvement. Research strongly supports family involvement as one way to improve student performance and states that those improvements go beyond the short term. Family involvement must become a priority for all schools. Since family involvement has been widely researched, and the types of involvement described in this manual have been strongy supported as most effective, it is not necessary for each district to define family involvement in its own terms. This book is intended as a guide for an effective, comprehensive family involvement program; each school is encouraged to use this book as a springboard for a total program.


Family Involvement Model
Interceder
Supporter
Mediator
Collaborator
Communicator
Teacher
Teacher
Coach
SCHOOL
CHILD
FAMILY
Nurturer
Nurturer
Learner
Audience
Decision Maker/Advocate
Loucks & Loucks, 1990

Families as Decision Makers and Advocates

1.

Key concept

- Families must be viewed as partners in the education of their young adolescents by being involved as decision makers and advocates in the learning process.

Outcomes

- Understand and identify family, school, and community needs
- Develop a family involvement policy
- Develop a district vision of parent involvement
- Develop a strategy for implementation
- Develop a comprehensive family involvement program

Keys to implementation

When schools and families work together optimum education can become a reality for every child. The research on schools and family involvement reveals that one of the most difficult areas for school personnel is finding ways for families to participate in the decision-making process. Traditionally, schools only included parents as a part of this process when legislated to do so. When schools involve families in governance, a higher degree of other types of involvement follows.

One way in which the school can begin to determine the extent of their desire and motivation for family involvement is to ask some hard questions. *What does our school hope to accomplish through broader family involvement? Who do we really want to involve? How do we hope to involve them? How deep is our commitment to have families involved in substantive ways?* These and other questions can be found on the worksheet called "Developing a Strategy Toward Family Involvement." Once schools have answered these difficult questions, some potential strategies for reaching greater numbers of families may include identifying the needs. The "Sample Partnership Assessment Survey" can serve as a guide for this process.

When a school develops a family involvement policy (see Family Involvement Policy Guidelines and Sample Policy, pp. 19, 20), it conveys to families and communities that the school is serious about the partnership. In addition, where written policies exist, more resources seem to be allocated for family involvement efforts. Schools also need to work collaboratively with families in developing a vision statement for their family and school partnership. The vision statement should be based upon the beliefs of the families and school staff regarding the purposes of schooling and the nature of partnerships in achieving those purposes.

In order to develop a comprehensive family involvement program, key issues need to be addressed. Schools should become aware of the barriers that inhibit families from becoming involved (see "Strategies for Overcoming Barriers to Family Involvement" and "Strategies That Might Unlock the Family Involvement Door", pp. 23, 24). Some families may be hard to reach. Schools need to develop ways to work with families who believe they have nothing to contribute to the schools or to their young adolescent's learning. Schools must recognize that many parents of middle grades students have had a steady diet of negative news from schools or may have had unpleasant experiences themselves. Key communicators (parents who are recognized and trusted by other parents) can be utilized in developing strategies that appeal to "hard to reach" families. Schools that have practiced "Good New Notes," classroom newsletters written in a plain, easy-to-read style that provide suggestions for how parents can help have had a good response. Holding parent conferences in community centers, videotaping messages, or providing educational videos for home use are ways to encourage parents to become school advocates. Family involvement must extend beyond single events and be well planned, comprehensive, and long-term to be effective.

There is no duty we so much underrate as the duty of being a good parent.
— Anonymous

Developing a Strategy to Involve Families

1. What does your school hope to accomplish through broader family participation and support? Be specific and frank.

2. Specifically, who are the people you wish to involve?

3. Take a close look at your school, at the specific audience you are trying to reach. What do you see as obstacles in the school/community and specifically among your desired audience to the type of involvement you are seeking? List these.

4 For each of the obstacles identified, list ways to overcome them.

5. List one or more strategies for motivating various individuals to broader participation and support.

Sample Partnership Assessment Survey

SCHOOL DISTRICT NAME _____

Directions: For each statement below, indicate the degree to which the school district acts in accordance with the statement. Mark the scale after each statement to represent your best judgment, as follows:

1 = No evidence exists that the school district complies with this.
2 = Very little evidence exists that this is being done.
3 = An average amount of emphasis is given to this item.
4 = A good deal of attention is given to this item.
5 = Most school districts would *not* do as good a job on this item, as is being done in this school.

If the statement appears to be irrelevant or *not applicable* to this school district, mark only the space labeled NA.

Public Information

1.	The board of education has a stated policy which encourages and promotes public information and community involvement.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
2.	The district has an ongoing program of public information and community involvement with established goals and objectives.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
3.	Community groups, families, students, and other interested citizens are involved continually in activities related to improvement of the school systems.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
4.	There is a regular and continuing effort to enlist the involvement and assistance of news media in the public information effort.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
5.	The program seeks to involve district employees and the board of education, who have been appraised of the proposed and specific goals of the public information program.	1 2 3 4 5 NA

6.	Each school principal develops and carries out a school-community relations program for his/her attendance area.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
7.	Persons charged with communications responsibilities for specialized projects coordinate their activities with those of the person who has overall responsibility.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
8.	In-service training opportunities in communications and/or public information are provided for staff members.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
9.	Specific means have been developed to periodically determine the attitudes and desires of the local community.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
10.	The public is provided with opportunities and procedures to express concerns and to ask questions of administration and the board of education.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
11.	Questions and concerns of the public receive a response within a reasonable time.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
12.	The district has developed an emergency plan to handle public communications in time of crisis such as tornado, epidemic, bus accident, riot, strike, etc.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
13.	District-wide school calendars are distributed to the homes regularly.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
14.	An abstract of district policies is made available to every citizen of the district.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
15.	The person responsible for the public information program is affiliated with professional community-relations organizations such as the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) and other professional organizations.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
16.	Assistance and consulting services are provided to the district's staff and the schools in the production of printed materials, such as brochures, photographs, graphic arts, etc.	1 2 3 4 5 NA

(continued)

Community Involvement

17.	Advisory groups functioning in the district clearly understand their roles and responsibilities.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
18.	Advisory groups have a liaison with the board and/or administration.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
19.	The community has frequent opportunities to participate in educational planning.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
20.	The board has provided financial support for involvement activities where necessary.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
21.	Family and community members are serving as volunteer workers in various schools.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
22.	Regularly scheduled meetings are held with families and teachers to discuss educational policies of the district.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
23.	A schedule of activities involving families, community, and school staff members is made available to every citizen.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
24.	Incoming students from feeder schools are given an opportunity to visit the new school with their family.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
25.	The district involves family members in various aspects of curriculum development.	1 2 3 4 5 NA
26.	A recent study has been made to understand the community in which the schools exist. (Composition of the community. What economic levels? What are parent expectations, etc.?)	1 2 3 4 5 NA
27.	Students are given opportunity to be involved in solving district-wide problems.	1 2 3 4 5 NA

Family Involvement Policy Guidelines

1. Writing the policy
   a. Survey family members, teachers, youth, administration, and community for input.
   b. Set time lines (include beginning and ending points)

2. Proving necessary policy components
   a. District statement of commitment relative to
      1. Staff development for teachers and staff working with families
      2. Family involvement for all children at all levels (specifics)
      3. Opportunities for participation by family members, community, staff, students, and administration

   b. Recognition of diverse family structures, circumstances, and responsibilities including differences that might impede family participation (literacy, languages, child care, and living arrangements)

   c. Process for regular, two-way communication including those who lack literacy skills or are non-English speaking, as well as non-custodial parents

3. Specifying parent-teacher-student conference guidelines may be beneficial.
   a. Variety of ways to inform (i.e. flyers, marquee, radio, newsletters)
   b. Suggestions for teachers to improve process (sitting arrangement, start positive, etc.)
   c. Suggestions for administrators to improve welcoming climate.
   d. Procedure for evaluation.

4. Establishing procedures for linkages of social service agencies and community groups who are involved with the families.

5. Disseminating policy

6. Implementing guidelines
   a. Specific steps
   b. Time lines
   c. Reevaluation

Sample Family Involvement Policy Statement

The board of education recognizes the necessity and value of family involvement to support student success and academic achievement. In order to assure collaborative partnerships between families and schools, the board, working through administrators, is committed to:

a. involving families as partners in school governance including shared decision making.

b. establishing effective two-way communication with all families, respecting their diversity and differing needs.

c. developing strategies and programmatic structures at schools to enable families to participate actively in their children's education.

d. providing support and coordination for school staff and families to implement and sustain appropriate family involvement from kindergarten to grade twelve.

e. utilizing schools to connect students and families with community resources that provide educational enrichment and support.

District Vision of Family Involvement

Comprehensive family involvement includes the participation of families in all aspects of their children's education resulting in improved, supportive relationships among students, families and teachers and in significant academic and social growth for students. The district wide family involvement program is defined by three major components — capacity building and preparation for school staff, partnership development, and follow-up and support.

1. **Capacity Building and Preparation for School Staff**
   Effective involvement of families is dependent upon the initiative and willingness of the school staff to welcome such participation. When school staff and families work together in a cooperative systematic way, students benefit and school staff's feeling of success is enhanced. Training opportunities must be made available to help teachers and other school staff expand their awareness, understand the benefits of family involvement, and develop skills in communication and collaboration.

2. **Partnership Development**
   Schools must develop site programs that enable those adults most important to students to interact on a regular, long-term basis so that students are provided with the support, continuity and role models they need. This is especially important in low income, ethnically or culturally diverse communities where school personnel and students risk alienation if there is no connection or continuity between home and school.

   Families should be involved in all aspects of the school program. In addition to participating in conferences with teachers and attending school functions, there should be opportunities for families to learn good parenting skills, to support their children's school learning with home learning activities, and to develop leadership skills by serving on school committees and advisory groups.

3. **Follow-up and Support**
   Schools should develop and implement family involvement programs that reflect the needs of the students and families the school serves. The ongoing participation of families in meaningful roles is an integral part of the climate of an effective school. Central office personnel should be responsible for providing guidance to school sites as they develop family involvement programs and assist sites in assessing progress toward their goals. Support for the development of family involvement programs should be provided.

Statement of Vision for Our Family-School Partnership

Write a statement of your school's vision based upon the beliefs of families and the school staff regarding the purposes of schooling and how families and staff can work together to achieve those purposes.

OUR VISION IS:

Strategies for Overcoming Barriers to Family Involvement

The literature identifies three groups of families as being "hard-to-reach." They are families who (1) have low self-esteem, (2) do not realize the importance of their role in a child's education and (3) are overwhelmed just trying to meet the basic needs of the family.

> *Hard-to-reach families are those who have not initiated contact with the school and who have not responded to three invitations from the school to work together with them on the child's education* (Olmsted, 1991).

Family Involvement Barriers		Keys to Overcome Barriers
Lack of transportation, child care	_____	Provide transportation, child care
Lack of "teaching skills"	_____	Provide daily routine (home) activities, training sessions
Overwhelmed by basic needs with limited resources available.	_____	Provide information about available community services; make referral if appropriate
Language difficulties (e.g. non-English-speaking illiterate)	_____	Translate materials, have person who speaks same language make telephone call, home visit
Employment schedule makes involvement difficult	_____	Schedule breakfast meeting, evening meeting, set up meeting at place of employment
Feelings of alienation toward schools, teachers, and administrators	_____	Ask involved family to initiate contact; involve community or church leader as intermediary

Family involvement is not an event, it is a process.

Strategies That Might Unlock the Family Involvement Door

Use personal contact.

Involve key communicators.

Start with successful activities.

**Don't be limited by lack of funds;
Families can be resourceful.**

Be patient, persevere, don't give up.

Convey positive information at each meeting.

Have realistic expectations.

Have families help plan and implement events.

Celebrate student successes.

Provide a welcoming environment.

Inform, inform, inform.

Train school staff in public relations.

Be aware of student backgrounds; make needed recommendations.

Emphasize partnership concept for student success.

Solicit each family's help in a school need project

Provide door prizes and other incentives for attendance.

Ways to Ensure Well-Attended and Effective Meetings

Have children perform or have families interact with their children, e.g. art, history or science fairs, project, multicultural events, interdisciplinary activity;

Organize a student welcoming committee;

Provide refreshments, name tags, child care, and transportation;

Suggest that families bring all family members.

Advertise beginning and ending times and stick to the schedule.

Set tone of mutual respect.

Involve many parents in small ways rather than a few parents in large ways.

Announce specific incentives for attendance.

Provide student incentives for bringing or encouraging parent-family attendance.

Increase teacher presence.

Make personal contact — call a few key communicators from each class and ask them to call others.

Require adult representatives for student participation at special event, such as Fun Fair, Storytelling Night, Art Fair.

Provide welcome signs, adequate, clearly marked parking, effective sound system, and adequate seating.

Inform participants of next event.

Families and Schools as Communicators

2

Key Concept

- Schools communicating with families/ community and families communicating with schools

Outcomes

- Families, schools, and communities will learn ways to communicate more effectively with each other.
- Communication between families and schools will increase in importance.
- Parent-teacher-student conferences will become more effective as parents and teachers work collaboratively to design goals that benefit the child.
- Team interaction with families will improve in quality and frequency.
- The number of positive phone calls from school to home and home to school will increase.
- Home visits will be encouraged.
- Teachers and families will implement strategies to address the physical, social, and academic needs of the young adolescent.

Keys to implementation

Communication is a critical factor in effective family involvement at the middle level. Schools have long been involved in one-way communication through newletters, handbooks, and fliers advertising events and special programs. Even though these can be good sources of information for families, schools often fail to consider appropriate reading levels, the need to offer information in various primary languages, or the opportunity to use a variety of formats (audiotape, videotape) when appealing to parents. At the middle level, students can be involved in writing and producing newsletters, audiotapes, or short videotapes to convey information to families while providing a meaningful learning activity for students. In return, interactive homework assignments (see TIPS page) can capitalize on providing information from the home to the school. If the school's efforts toward family involvement are to be effective, it is essential that two-way communication be improved.

Research supports the fact that the school administrator is the tone-setter for the climate of acceptance of family involvement and the attitude school personnel take toward such programs. Indicators of an open attitude toward family involvement include:

a. how frequently parents and family members are encouraged to come to school;
b. how often teachers are encouraged to telephone, visit, or contact parents; and how information derived is used to improve student learning experiences;
c. preparation of teachers, staff members, office personnel, and school facilities in anticipation of parent/student/teacher conferences and other school events;
d. the type of reception families receive when visiting schools on occasions other than special events or conferences;
e. the response families receive when providing individual information or expressing special concerns or needs;
f. the manner in which assistance from the family is solicited and appreciated;
g. what types of support structures are in place for families with special needs.

Other strategies to promote two-way communication are suggested in this section of the manual. The pages on "How Schools Can Communicate Effectively With Families" and "How Families Can Communicate Effectively With Schools" provide numerous ways to increase communication between school and home. Areas to consider are listed on the pages entitled "Information Teachers Should Provide for New Families" and "Information Teachers Should Provide for Families at Conferences." Parent teacher conferences can be a significant tool for building rapport between school and home. However, few schools model or provide training in conferencing skills or positive telephone communication.

To assist administrators and team leaders in that in-service effort, several pages relate to parent-teacher-student conferences, contacting homes, and providing alternate forms of contact with families. The list "Elements Necessary for Successful Parent-Teacher-Student Conferences" is already formatted for use as a handout or transparency for conferencing inservice programs. The "Parent-Teacher-Student Conferences" section provides step-by-step guidelines related to conferencing that may be useful to new teachers to preview and practice procedures and veteran teachers to review their conferencing protocol. The "Student-Parent-Teacher Worksheet" has been particularly useful for schools in preparing for and conducting conferences. By using this worksheet, each participant may contribute to the outcome and feel a greater ownership in the process. An important section often overlooked is the evaluation of the conference. There is a sample included under "Evaluating the Conference." Few teachers have been trained in making home visits or communicating to families in alternative ways. The handouts entitled "Home Visits," "Positive Phone Calls," and "Communicating Through Meetings" may be helpful in promoting these skills.

How Schools Can Communicate Effectively With Families

1. Provide families with a handbook that clearly states classroom/school homework policies, grading policies, discipline guidelines, etc. Require an adult signature to ensure families have read these policies and guidelines.
2. Provide students and families with clear directions for special projects and assignments.
3. Contact families as soon as a problem begins. Don't wait until it has reached crisis proportions.
4. Keep detailed records of student progress and communicate regularly with families. If family's help is needed, be specific about how families can help. Provide a vehicle for parent questions and concerns.
5. Respond to requests from families promptly.
6. Hold a "Family Night" to discuss how parents and family members can assist with their child's learning and study habits.
7. Provide students with take home "loaner" games, activities, word lists, etc., to encourage family/ student interaction focused on learning.
8. Make positive phone calls and send positive notes more frequently than the negative ones. This will enhance the family/student relationship and attitudes toward school. Be specific: "Jordan is off to an excellent start. He has remembered his homework every day this week."
9. Send a classroom newsletter that tells families of classroom learning and team activities. Middle level students can develop their own newsletters by writing about, filming clips of, or creating a computer web site for activities in which they are involved.
10. Involve families in problem solving. Example: Collaborate with family members on meaningful study/ homework contracts.
11. Create a "Homework Hot Line" and "Questions Hotline" where parents can hear assignments and record their questions after hours for a response by the school the following day.
12. Hold parent-teacher-student conferences often and at various times of the day and evening.
13. Encourage communication via electronic mail and the internet. Questions, answers, information about events or pertinent information from families may be accessed easily through this format.

How Families Can Communicate Effectively with Schools

1. Get acquainted with your young adolescent's teachers and the principal before school begins or during the first week of school. Make it a priority to maintain regular contact throughout the school year.

2. Obtain a copy of the student-family handbook. Read it carefully and ask questions about those items that are unclear or vague.

3. Ask about the homework policy of each teacher on the team.

4. Notify the school promptly about any changes in your family life that may affect your adolescent, including changes in family work status, change of address and/or phone number, change in living arrangements.

5. Notify the school promptly when your child will be absent and ask for assignments if the absence exceeds more than one day.

6. Call immediately to make an appointment with your child's advisor or team of teachers if he/she talks about a problem at school or seems unhappy about school.

7. Support school assignments by assisting with school projects, gathering resource materials, or helping to build models.

8. Offer to send/share materials from home that might enrich learning activities.

9. Provide time each day to discuss with your child what happened at school. Share your own activities, and focus on social as well as learning experiences.

10. Check daily with your child to see if there are notes from the school that need a response. Comment on your child's work and praise work whenever it is deserved.

Information Teachers Should Provide for New Families

1. If not riding a school bus, when is it most appropriate/safe for young adolescents to arrive at school and what is there for them to do prior to the beginning of school? Is there adult supervision? When is school dismissed for the day?

2. What is the team and school-wide discipline policy? How will parents be informed of any infractions of the rules?

3. How is the day scheduled? Are there abbreviated schedules for special circumstances? How many teachers are on the team, and how do they utilize the schedule?

4. What can parents expect in the way of homework assignments?

5. How are instructional grouping decisions made and is their child in any particular group?

6. How long is lunch and what provisions are made for hot lunches? Does the school have an open or closed campus?

7. What standardized tests are given and when? How do teachers use the results? How are the results and implications reported to parents?

8. What can you do to help children who seem to learn faster or slower than the rest?

9. What exploratory, gifted, and remedial programs are there?

10. What co-curricular opportunities such as clubs and intramurals are available? Are there membership requirements or conditions?

Information Teachers Should Provide for Families at Conferences

1. How will parents be made aware of their child's school work on a regular, ongoing basis?

2. How can families check their child's progress in each subject?

3. What kind of books/resources/technology is/should their child be using?

4. Is their child grouped for any subject and if so, how and why?

5. Has their child demonstrated initiative, originality, or special talent? How is their child being challenged and able to demonstrate learning in these areas?

6. What evidence is there that their child gets along well with other young adolescents?

7. Does their child consistently complete the assigned work, including homework, in a timely manner? If not, what organizational and time-management skills might be developed?

8. Does their child show respect for the rights and property of others?

9. What evidence is there that their child is working up to his/her potential?

10. In what specific ways can families help their child at home?

Elements Necessary for Successful Parent-Teacher-Student Conferences

- **Spirit of Cooperation** - Families and teachers leave with a positive attitude toward each other and a willingness to continue working cooperatively together. Not all issues are necessarily resolved, but there is a willingness to continue the dialogue.

- **Mutual Understanding** - Family members, students, and teachers leave the conference with a better understanding of each other's goals, expectations and what each is trying to do to support the learning process.

- **Increased Trust** - There is an increase in the level of trust between families, students, and teachers and no one is trying to control the behavior of the others.

- **Level of Knowledge** - Families and teacher/teacher teams have a increased level of knowledge about the early adolescent.

- **Enact a plan** - Family member, student, and teachers end the conference with a plan of action to help the early adolescent be successful.

Parent-Teacher-Student Conferences

Note: These steps are based on the assumption that the conferences will be teacher directed. Many middle schools have moved to having the student plan and direct the conference with his/her parents. This arrangement has many benefits and, where implemented, has been highly successful.

Step One: Preparing for the Conference

1. **Have a procedure for documenting each student's academic progress and behavior.**
   a. Prepare a file folder, file box or notebook for each student.
   b. Include both academic progress and behavioral records, including examples of student's work, test results, anecdotal records, attendance and health records, responses to questionnaires, family notes and questions.

2. **Contact the family/guardian(s) to arrange the conference.**
   a. Make arrangements by telephone or letter. Explain the purpose, place, time, length of the conference, and child care provisions. There is less confusion if arrangements are confirmed by letter.
   b. Include in the letter a list of preparatory questions or a planning sheet to help families prepare for the conference. This will help to identify family concerns.
   c. Hold conferences at times when family/guardian(s) can attend without too much inconvenience. Conferences may be scheduled before school or work begins, in the evening, or on Saturdays. When possible, coordinate conference times for any siblings in the school.
   d. Arrange for translators if necessary.

3. **Arrange a private place for the conference.**
   a. Hold the conference in a place where a private, uninterrupted conversation with the family/guardian and student can take place.
   b. Seat the participants on the same level, preferably away from the teacher's desk. Arrange for appropriate sized chairs, around a table, if possible. Have the room freshly ventilated and well lit.
   c. Arrange for a comfortable place where early arrivals can wait. Possibly provide a folder of the student's work to examine or ask them to fill out a form about any concerns, or have available copies of materials that have been used in recent studies.

4. **Think through your objectives for the conference**.
   a. What do you want to accomplish? What do you need to communicate? Write down the areas or topics you plan to cover.
   b. What steps can you follow during the conference to assure that your objectives are met? What information do you want from the family/guardian(s) and student? What points will you make? What opportunities will you offer to the student to make comments and suggestions? What suggestions will you offer?

c. What materials will you share with the participants? Are they organized to complement your plan?
d. How will you end the conference? What specific steps will you recommend? How can each party work together to improve the student's education and/or behavior?

5. **Prepare students by talking about the purposes of conferences in advisories or in individual conferences, or with the class.**
   a. Help students understand how the conference can help them.
   b. Ask them to complete a simple questionnaire about themselves.
   c. Enlist students in decorating the room with displays of their work and making it a welcoming place for families.

Step Two: Conducting the Conference

Note: Prior to the conferences, place adult-sized chairs outside the door and post a list of the scheduled conferences. Provide educational materials, yearbooks, and other team-related visuals for family/guardian(s) to browse through as they wait. Keep appointments on schedule.

1. **Welcome and establish rapport with the family as an adult.**
   a. Begin the conference with some general conversation by asking about the family's work, hobbies, interests.
   b. State the purpose and time available for the conference. Encourage note-taking and discuss opportunities for a follow-up meeting.

2. **Discuss the student's positive attributes.**
   a. Be as specific as possible in describing the student's strengths, assets, and positive accomplishments; give examples.
   b. Ask families to describe what they see as the student's strengths.

3. **Describe the student's progress focusing on what has been learned in each subject since school started.** Note: Team teachers should emphasize different areas of student growth - academic, personal and interpersonal development.
   a. Be as precise as possible. Show examples.
   b. Ask family/guardian(s) how they feel about their child's progress. Listen for expectations and frustration. If necessary, paraphrase the concerns so that mutual understanding is ensured.

4. **Discuss areas that need improvement.**
   a. Begin by asking family/guardian(s) what area they feel they would most like to see their child strengthen.
   b. Describe, in specific terms, areas in need of improvement, and reach agreement on what each party will do to address the problem.
   c. Ask for family/guardian(s) concerns and suggestions.
   d. Ask for student concerns and suggestions.

5. **Identify one area to work on for growth or improvement and develop a plan of action.**
   a. Choose one thing that concerns both you and the family/guardian(s). Be sure it is one with which the adults can help. Ask for ideas on ways they could help.
   b. Give specific suggestions, if the family/guardian(s) are unsure what to do.
   c. List actions that have a high probability of success, then choose one or two for the family/guardian(s) and student to try. Write them on the Student-Family-Teacher Worksheet. (See sample)
   d. State what you will be doing in the classroom to help the student.
   e. Establish a timeline with family/guardian(s) for these actions.
   f. Discuss some kind of reward to the student for improvement in the selected area.

6. **Conclude the conference on a positive note.**
   a. Summarize what each party has agreed to do.
   b. Indicate how and when you will follow-up; thank participants for coming.

Step Three: Following-up After the Conference

1. **Document the conference for future reference.**
   a. Have a simple form to record the important points. This may be a copy of the worksheet completed during the conference.
   b. Turn in a copy of the form to the principal or counselor or place in the team log for later reference.

2. **Evaluate the conference.**
   a. Ask each participant to complete an overall conference evaluation form immediately after the conference (See sample evaluation form.)
   b. Evaluate the conference yourself by assessing if your objectives were met, if rapport was established with both family and student, and how the conference might have been improved.

3. **Follow-up with a phone call or note to express appreciation and to report in the next few days any progress the student makes toward the goals.**

4. **Send a copy of the plans made during the conference to the family/guardian(s).**

(Adapted from Chrispeels, 1991; Cale, 1992.)

Parent-Teacher-Student Worksheet

Teacher's Name: _____ Phone: _____

Student's Name: _____ Phone: _____

Family Member's Name(s): _____ Phone: _____

Student's strengths:

Areas (*knowledge, skill, attitude or behavior*) needing improvement:

Why?:

What the student will do:

What the family will do:

What the teacher will do:

How we will assess improvement:

Comments:

Evaluating the Conference

Parents, teachers, and students should all evaluate the conference to obtain insights into the attitudes of each party, to identify problems that may have occurred, and to assess how future conferences might be improved. The evaluation may be a simple three-part questionnaire asking:

1. Did the conference accomplish what you had hoped?
2. What did you learn from the conference?
3. What was the most helpful part of the conference?
4. How could the conference have been improved?

A slightly more detailed evaluation form appears below.

Sample Evaluation of a Parent-Teacher-Student Conference

Dear _____:

In order to improve our services to you, we would like your comments about the conference today. Please check those responses that represent your views. It is not necessary for you to sign your name. After completing the form, please leave it in the evaluation box outside the principal's office. Thank you.

__ 1. I was allowed to discuss items which most concerned me about my child.
__ 2. My questions were answered to my satisfaction.
__ 3. I felt at ease during the conference.
__ 4. The teacher(s) was/were courteous and treated me with respect.
__ 5. I developed a plan with the teacher(s) of things we can do to maintain or improve behavior/academics.
__ 6. I think the plan is something that I can easily use with my child.
__ 7. I feel more positive about my child and his/her education.
__ 8. The conference was a positive experience.
__ 9. I plan to come to school again on the next conference day.

Comments:

10 Ways Teams Can Help Families

School teams can create opportunities for families to :

1. Interact with other families to discuss common successes and common concerns.
2. Meet persons who can answer questions about their young adolescent's social, emotional, and physical needs.
3. Become informed about special programs that are available to help families.
4. Learn about their child's progress firsthand through observation and conversation.
5. Discover discipline techniques to help them manage their child's behavior.
6. Learn new skills or upgrade existing ones through family classes and adult education programs.
7. Feel good about themselves by sharing their skills and talents.
8. Learn interactive activities to enhance relationships and communication at home.
9. Be involved in decision making and policy formation at school.
10. Demonstrate to their children that education is valued.

10 Ways Families Can Help Teams

Families can:

1. Attend school-sponsored activities.

2. Encourage learning by communicating their support for homework and projects.

3. Enhance school programs, advisories, team activities, and their own child's experiences by sharing their time, skills, special talents, hobbies, personal travel experiences.

4. Serve on committees and volunteer.

5. Meet their young adolescent's basic social, emotional, and physical needs so that their child can come to school ready to learn.

6. Encourage reading through providing materials, modeling reading, planning trips to the library, and possibly exploring computer technologies that involve reading.

7. Participate interactively in the learning process.

8. Be advocates for the school at work, social gatherings, and civic organizations.

9. Communicate to the school special concerns or events that may affect their child's learning.

10. Respond quickly to communications from the school.

Home Visits

Home visits can be used to:

- Introduce families and teachers to each other,
- Welcome new families to the school community,
- Acquaint the home visitor with a child's family and culture,
- Demonstrate home learning activities to families,
- Report on student progress in school,
- Solve specific problems, and,
- Survey families for their views on school policies and programs.

Home visits may be the only way of communicating with hard-to-reach families who are reluctant or unable to come to school meetings, who do not have a telephone, or who cannot read written material sent from the school.

Benefits of Home Visits

The student can:

- Have the opportunity of welcoming the teacher(s) into the home and of watching how the teacher reacts to it,
- Show the teacher new aspects of him/herself,
- Illustrate problems and situations that he/she may find difficult to articulate,
- Profit from the relationship that the teacher establishes and maintains with the family.

The family can:

- Meet, on a more relaxed basis, the teachers with whom the student spends an important portion of his/her day,
- Have the opportunity to ask questions of a professional educator,
- Communicate from the security and comfort of the home,
- Illustrate problems or frustrations that require direct observation,
- Ask how to help the student at home, knowing that the teacher(s) can see the home in which the proposed assistance would take place.

The teacher/team can:

- Obtain support from the family that can reinforce the teacher/team's efforts.
- Gain insights into the family-child relationship that influences the student.
- Obtain specific information about the student that is of value in providing motivation.
- Observe situations that might foretell potential changes or account for changes that have already taken place in the student's behavior.
- Provide information and support to family regarding the student.
- Learn how he/she is perceived by the student and the family of the student.
- Observe the degree of social order or disorder in the home that influences student behavior.

The school can:

- Signify the willingness of the school to "go more than halfway" to involve families in their young adolescent's education.
- Give families a clear message that the school is caring and concerned about communication with the family.
- Increase the level of trust between the school and its families.
- Increase the willingness of the families to come to the school.

School administrators can:

- Arrange time for staff to plan and make home visits.
- Provide early dismissal or substitutes.
- Offer escorts and translators to teachers/teams.
- Set the example by visiting one home per month.
- Encourage teachers/teams to make at least one home visit a month.
- Provide mileage reimbursement.
- Allocate resources to hire home-school visitors.

Home visits can be conducted by administrators, teachers, staff, community aides, and/or trained volunteers. The home visitor should be sensitive to cultural differences and always set a tone of mutual respect and consideration. If families refuse a home visit, their wishes should be respected. Reluctant families may be more receptive to a home visit if the visitor is accompanied by a familiar third party. Home visits may also be held in housing project meeting rooms, church recreation halls, synagogues, or community meeting rooms.

Preparing for the Home Visit

The commitment of the entire school staff is needed for a program of home visits to be successful. Administrators and teachers/teams must be involved in planning the program and must agree to participate. Home visits are more likely to be successful under these conditions:

1. **The visit is scheduled.** There is no "best' time to visit. Some schools have scheduled home visits in the afternoon immediately after school dismissal. With so many employed family members, early evenings or weekends are usually preferred. Teachers of siblings may collaborate to schedule concurrently their home visits.
2. **Contact families first, establish rapport.** Explain that you want an opportunity to get acquainted with the child's family so that you can work together to help the child learn even more. Emphasize that the purpose of the visit is to introduce the teacher and family members to each other, and not to discuss the child's progress. Set up an appointment time when families can talk for 15-30 minutes, uninterrupted. Be clear about where the meeting will happen, how to get there, whether an interpreter is needed.
3. **Send a letter home explaining the desire to have teachers make informal visits to all students' homes (applies only if some family member is literate in English).** This letter should include a form that family members can mail back which allows them to graciously decline/accept this opportunity. The letter should state clearly that the intent of this 15-30 minute visit is to introduce the teacher or team of teachers to family members. This visit is not a substitute for a family-teacher conference and is not to discuss the child's progress. The tone of the letter should be friendly and informal.
4. **Suggest to family members that the young adolescent plan ahead of time what special things he/she might want to share —** hobbies, special interests, projects, favorite books, or places in the home.
5. **Prepare questions to involve the family members in a discussion of the young adolescent's social, emotional, and educational development.** For example:
   - What are your child's interests, talents, and special abilities?
   - Does your child enjoy reading and if so, what kind of books or other reading does he/she enjoy?
   - How do you think he/she feels about school?
   - Does he/she show curiosity by asking questions about any special area(s)?
   - Does your child have specific responsibilities at home?
   - How does your child spend his/her spare time?

- Have you noticed any special learning problems?
- Do you have any special concerns or anything you would like to ask?

6. **Prior to the visit, think through the following questions:**
   - Am I going to the home with an open mind?
   - Am I willing to learn from the family?
   - Do I believe the family member(s) has/have anything of value to teach or share?
   - Are my attitudes conducive to creating a positive, ongoing relationship?
7. **Arrange for a translator if the school visitors do not speak the family's language.**

(Adapted from Chrispeels, Boruta, & Daugherty, 1988; Decker and Decker, 1988; Faison, 1984)

During the Home Visit

1. Establish rapport with the family through a warm, friendly greeting.
2. Take print, audio, and/or visual materials which will familiarize the family with the middle school and other aspects of your team.
3. Make it clear to the family that you are concerned about the child's overall social, emotional, and physical well-being as well as intellectual growth.
4. Close the visit by thanking the family for their time and hospitality.

After the Home Visit

The school staff/ team should:

1. Log and document important details of the home visit.
2. Follow-up with the student and/or family on any specific activity or arrangement discussed in the visit.
3. Send a personal message so that the family member(s) will know that the follow-through action has been taken.
4. Share critical information with other school staff, where appropriate.
5. Evaluate the effectiveness of the visit/process.

Positive Phone Calls

Parents and family members, unfortunately, are not accustomed to receiving good news from the school about their children over the telephone. Therefore, imagine how you would feel if you were contacted by the school and told that your son/daughter was doing well academically and exhibiting exemplary behavior. Home-school communication is greatly improved through personalized positive telephone contact between school and families.

School administrators must model positive phone calls as well as provide staff with the time and resources required to implement a positive phone call program. Teacher teams should be involved in the planning of these programs to ensure their commitment to making them effective.

In order to ensure success with a positive phone program, schools must be willing to:

1. **Provide adequate access to telephones.** The program will not succeed unless teachers have a private and comfortable place from which to make their calls. Schools may need, therefore, to install additional telephone lines in teacher workrooms, or provide incentives for teachers to call in the evenings when more families are at home.
2. **Make time available for the staff to make the calls.** Make positive telephone calls during team or individual preparation time. Making at least one positive call for each corrective (negative) call is a good practice to establish.
3. **Develop a set of guidelines for making telephone calls.** These guidelines could outline purposes for making telephone calls to families as follows:
   - Introducing the teacher to the family
   - Telling the family about what their child is studying
   - Inviting the families to open houses, conferences, other school functions, and to visit the classroom
   - Commenting on the child's progress
   - Informing the family of a particular achievement of the child, such as having been selected "Student of the Week"
   - Informing the family of particular strengths of the child and/or sharing an anecdote that involves the child.
4. **Provide translation services for non-English speaking families, when needed.**
5. **Provide a reporting system.** Teachers should maintain a calling log/book to record positive phone calls. This will provide a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of their efforts.

Sample Script of a Get Acquainted Telephone Call

Teacher: I am _____ _____, Rosita's teacher. I am calling the families of all my students to get acquainted with them early in the school year.

Recently I sent a letter telling you how I will let you know about Rosita's progress, and what is expected in terms of homework. Did you get the letter? Do you have any questions, or is there anything I could clarify for you?

Family Member: This is her mother. Is she in any trouble? Is she doing all right?

Teacher: Yes, Rosita is doing fine at this time. As the school year progresses, and I have more time to work with her, I will be able to be more specific on her strengths and the areas in which she needs to improve. Do you recall getting the letter?

Family Member: Oh, yes, Rosita brought it home .

Teacher: Do you have any questions? Or, is there anything I can clarify for you?

Family Member: Yes, Rosita doesn't always seem certain what the homework assignment is. Is there some way you could help her with that?

Teacher: One thing that might help is if Rosita would write down the assignment in her assignment notebook. I always write the assignments on the board so the students can copy it down. You might wish to remind her to be sure to write down the assignments, and I will do the same. Any other questions?

Family Member: No, that's all I can think of right now.

Teacher: I am looking forward to meeting you and discussing some things that you can do at home to help Rosita get the most out of her education experiences. You will be receiving some information about this.

Family Member: That would be helpful. I look forward to receiving it.

Teacher: I hope you will be able to visit the school and Rosita's classroom soon. Perhaps you could join her for lunch and then spend some time in her team.

Family Member: I would like to do that, but with my job it may be difficult.

Teacher: We will be having some activities after school and in the evenings for families, so perhaps we can get together then. Also, I would be willing to meet with you before school if you would like to set up an appointment.

Family Member: Okay, maybe I can work out something.

Teacher: Again, my name is (your name). If you have any questions you can reach me by calling the school during my team planning time which is (time of day) or leave a message and I will get back to you later that day. The number is (school phone number). I look forward to meeting you. Thank you for your time. Good evening.

Family Member: Thank you for calling.

Other Uses of the Telephone in Communicating with Families

Increasingly, schools are using automatic telephone answering or message machines to provide information to family members on a call-in basis. Information on topics similar to those addressed in school newsletters or handbooks, but in an oral, rather than a written form can be provided. Messages can be recorded in the languages spoken by the community members.

Automated telephone systems or telephone answering machines can be used, as follows:

- The telephone can serve as a recorded bulletin board giving time, date, and place for upcoming family meetings, extra curricular activities, and school events. These messages are changed regularly.
- The telephone system can provide pre-recorded information on district or school specific programs such as busing schedules, school lunch programs, and integration or magnet school options.
- The telephone can be used to give pre-recorded information to students and families on general topics of concern such as drug and alcohol abuse, ways for families to help their children succeed in school, school laws, and testing. A card is distributed to all families which lists the available pre-recorded messages.

The advantages of automated systems are that they are inexpensive to operate and the caller can remain anonymous. However, callers need to be given numbers where they can get additional help (Chrispeels, Boruta, Daugherty, 1988).

Additional Examples:

In Casey County, Kentucky, some classrooms have been outfitted with portable phones to make it easier for families and teachers to contact one another.

The Chapter 1 Program in Omaha, Nebraska, has established a telephone service called the Chapter 1 Talk Box. Callers hear a three-minute message about books and reading. Messages are changed twice a week and correspond with lessons in the classroom.

At Lincoln Prep High School in San Diego, the school helps students and their families find needed community services through a school-sponsored telephone referral system (Liontos, 1992).

TransFamily School Model:

In the TransFamily School Model, every teacher records a short message daily in an "electronic mailbox." When families call and enter the teacher's code number, they hear a summary of what the students studied that day, homework assignments, suggestions to families, and information about school activities. The message can be accessed from any touch-tone phone at any time. For more information contact: Jerold P. Bauch, Director, Betty Phillips Center for Familyhood Education, Box 81, Peabody College of Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee 37203, (615) 322-8080.

Communicating Through Meetings

Families value highly face-to-face interactions with teachers and other school personnel. Meetings can be a valuable vehicle for providing this contact that is essential in building the rapport, trust, and understanding necessary for families and teachers to work together. Important goals for all meetings are to convey information about the school and its programs, to initiate and maintain a positive feeling about the school and staff, and to solicit concerns and ideas from families.

"Meetings will be more successful if those who are planning the meeting follow some of these proven practices:

- Vary the types of meetings.
- Involve a cross-section of families in planning school meetings.
- Set an attendance target and decide how best to achieve it.
- Make sure the purpose is clear and important to families.
- Hold meetings at times most convenient for the intended audience.
- Provide adequate advance notice.
- Have family volunteers call other families.
- Announce the meeting on the school marquee and in other highly visible places.
- Send follow-up reminders.
- Provide transportation if needed.
- Provide child care for younger children, and involve young adolescents in this service.
- Evaluate the meeting to see if it can be improved in the future" (Chrispeels, Boruta, Daugherty, 1988).

Families with young adolescents are more likely to attend meetings when:

- their child is featured in some way,
- there will be an opportunity to examine student work and talk with teachers/teams,
- the time is convenient,
- they receive a personal welcome or invitation,
- they expect to experience a cordial atmosphere, including refreshments,
- the open house has a stated purpose the families consider personally important, and
- they have been involved in the planning.

In attracting families to events at the school, planners need to keep in mind the **"Three F's"— Family, Food, and Fun,** and the **"The Three P's —Planning, Preparation, and Publicity.**

An Open House or Curriculum Night works best if held at a time of few schedule conflicts and with much advance notice. It may be the culminating event of a school-wide art exhibit, science or history fair, or a thematic unit study by a team.

Organizing an Open House

1. **Invitations:** Have students make them and send them to the families the week before the event. Students love the important responsibility of inviting their families to the open house.
2. **Name Tags:** Have students make them during the day or as families enter the room in the evening.
3. Provide students incentives for family member attendance.
4. **Agenda:** The principal or teacher teams may briefly address the entire group, sharing information on general school goals and policies. Each teacher discusses the following with the families of students in his/her advisory or team:
   a. Respond to first of the year questions/ concerns.
   b. Explain the academic curriculum; major requirements such as book reports, special projects; grading procedures.
   c. Review the discipline procedures.
   d. Identify ways families can contribute to their child's learning and how the teacher will communicate with the families; what families can expect of the teacher and what the teacher can expect of families such as supervision for homework each night.
   e. Answer any other questions the families may have.
   g. Thank the families for coming. End the session promptly

Introducing the Year's Family Activities:

The Open House can also be used to tell families about ways they can help their young adolescent learn more at home. The workshops on families and homework give many good ideas in this area, too. The school and teacher's plan for involving families throughout the year can be discussed, and volunteers recruited to help plan and carry out home-school partnership activities.

Team Sessions

When families of a particular team meet together, teachers can relate their team expectations of the year's work, familiarize families with books and materials used, and review the schedule of a typical day. Teachers explain the curriculum, team organization, behavior codes, expectations, and planned activities for the year. This might be a good time to acquaint families with educational terms such as "teaming, "interdisciplinary units," "integrated curriculum," "computer-assisted instruction," etc. Teachers sometimes use this time to show advisory activities or teach demonstration lessons so that families can be exposed to the same kinds of lessons their young adolescents experience at school.

Open House or Curriculum Night Entertainment:

Although visiting team classrooms and meeting teachers is the heart of Open House or Curriculum Nights, consider "jazzing up" the occasion. A covered-dish supper could be served ahead of time with entertainment provided by the advisory groups. This way, dinner is taken care of, families can watch their young adolescents perform – and they are in school learning what goes on there.

Other Types of Family Meetings:

Orientation Visit

The school can host an Orientation Visit prior to the opening of school for families new to the community or for families of entry level students. This meeting provides an opportunity for families to learn about the school facility, school-wide and team policies (discipline, homework), extra curricular activities, scheduling, and involvement opportunities. In addition, families may meet with teachers individually or by teams.

Potluck Luncheon with the Teachers:

Teachers can invite family members of their advisory group to a noon potluck luncheon. In an informal way, the teacher shares the current activities of the advisory group. The informality will help families feel more comfortable in coming to school.

Invite a Family Member to Lunch:

Help working families to become active by asking them to visit the school during their lunch hour and eat lunch where the students do. The principal and teachers move about the lunchroom getting to know families and discussing the school.

Breakfast for Family Members:

Family members can be invited to come to school for breakfast with their teacher teams and to spend the morning observing core or encore classes where they can see first hand what their child is doing.

Families as Learners

3.

Key concept

- Parents are the first and best teachers. Schools can assist parents and family members in developing new skills in areas requested by parents. In so doing, teachers and school personnel can learn more about the needs, interests, and skill levels of families in their school.

Outcomes

- Families will recognize the social, emotional, and physical needs characteristic of young adolescents.
- Families will become aware of significant facts about young adolescent culture today.
- Families will learn how to meet the social, emotional, and physical needs of young adolescents.
- Families will learn positive ways to build self-discipline, set limits, develop responsibility, improve problem-solving abilities, and communicate concerns.
- Families will learn how to use natural and logical consequences to improve their child's behavior.
- Families will communicate more effectively with their young adolescent.

Keys to implementation

Families from all socioeconomic and educational backgrounds can benefit from opportunities to improve their skills. Research done by Swick (1992) makes it clear that parents of adolescents can improve their empathetic responses and develop decision-making skills when participating in learning opportunities designed for them. In addition, their research found that low- and middle-income parents benefited equally from the training. Schools can increase the probability that families will become involved in their young adolescent's education if options are made meaningful, address a known concern, or relate to a particular interest.

Before schools plan any program, the need should be assessed through a survey or other systematic way of documenting interest (see surveys included in this handbook). Efforts that have met with success include programs that are user-friendly and appropriate for the population they intend to serve. Some commercially available programs include STEP (Systematic Training for Effective Parenting) and P.E.T. (Parent Effectiveness Training). School facilitators must first understand *how* adults learn and what they want to know before investing time and resources (see "Adult Learning"). Schools have found that by offering adult literacy, GED classes, English as a Second Language sessions, and computer literacy workshops, improved student attitudes toward learning often result.

Offering non-threatening adult learning opportunities can reap benefits in increased family involvement. Providing an audio or video rental service for parents that offers short audiovisuals on topics such as how to assist with homework, how to help with special class projects, how to assist with math homework, or how to help young adolescents prepare for a test can be particularly helpful for adults. Teachers can create learning experiences for middle level students by having groups write, film, edit, market, or catalogue such materials. A 1994 survey by the US Department of Education found that 77% of all homes contain at least one VCR and almost all had an audio cassette recorder. If schools fail to capitalize on these resources within the home, they are missing great opportunities to promote learning. Schools may elicit feedback about such materials.

Schools may also send home the simple one-page tip sheets included in this section ("Discipline in Positive Ways," "Dealing With Aggression," and "Differences Between Punishment and Natural and Logical Consequences"). Communication between parent and child may be particularly strained during the middle level years. Families continue to voice concerns about their perceived inability to communicate with their young adolescent children. Six handouts are provided here to help families learn to improve their relationships through communication. Schools may use these pages as supplements to regular newsletters, materials for workshops or PTO programs, handouts for faculty inservice programs, or inserts for specialized train-the-trainer workshops.

Schools and families may also share perspectives through informational nights in which concepts and programs are discussed. Topics might be interactive homework, interdisciplinary units, the concept of teaming, or culminating activities. Information can also be made avialable by providing a parent resource room where materials may be checked out, examples displayed, small group discussions held, and where parents may talk with other parents.

Developing interactive homework assignments (see earlier section) can be useful as a means of allowing parents to see themselves as learners and to provide opportunities for parents and children to discuss issues on a regular basis. For example, Epstein (1989)

found a subject-specific connection between practices of parent involvement in reading and gains in reading achievement.

Schools should be cognizant that parents will be more willing to participate in learning when a) a positive climate is established, b) they feel no or little threat, c) they are actively involved in meaningful ways, d) they feel a need to change the situation or improve their own skills, e) they feel respected or that their contributions are valued, and f) that the event is participatory.

This section concludes with a survey that can be used as a blueprint for improving family-child relationships.

We need to hold our children and ourselves just as accountable for a good education as we hold the educators and educational systems by becoming fully participating partners in their success. By the year 2,000, every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children.

— Senator Mark Hatfield

Adult Learning

Adult Learning Principles	Utilizing Principles in Parent Training
Adults must value what is to be learned.	State the value of parent training in varied and frequent ways.
Adults must see direct application to their own lives.	Model the behaviors parents will use with their children.
Adults need to design their own learning experiences.	Involve parents in mutual planning of training experiences.
Adults want to participate in creative ways.	Provide choices, alternatives for involvement.
Adults need to relate their own experiences to the task at hand.	Provide many opportunities for personal reflection and sharing of experiences.
Adults want to experiment with learning immediately.	Incorporate activities after each section of training.

Facts About America's Young Adolescents*

Of 28 million adolescents between 7-18, seven million are at risk of serious risk of health and life-threatening activity. Their choices affect the quality and quantity of their lives. As health declines, academic performance declines. (Carnegie Report, *Fateful Choices*,1992)

ALCOHOL

- Is most abused drug among 8th graders
- 1 in 8 eighth graders binge drink; figure doubles by 10th grade
- 4 million report drinking because of low self-esteem
- 70% of attempted youth suicides attributed to alcohol & drug use
- 1 in 3 have drunk excessively by age 15

ILLICIT DRUGS

- 1 in 5 8th-10th graders have used inhalants (glue, aerosols, solvents) at least once
- Marijuana use has increased by 2% (11-13% from 1991-1994)
- 3% of 8th graders use LSD and cocaine
- Fewer recognize drug use as a risk or disapprove of use than in previous years

SEX and SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

- 1 in 4 adolescent females, 1 in 3 adolescent males have had sex
- Most adolescent sex occurs between 3-5 p.m.
- Heterosexual HIV positive incidences have surpassed homosexual
- Pregnancy rate in young adolescents has increased by 23% since 1987; 67% outside of marriage

SUICIDE

- Suicide rate among 10-14 year olds has tripled since 1968
- Preferred method of suicide for boys is guns, for girls is drug (pills) overdose

TOBACCO

- 3,000 adolescents start smoking every day
- Adolescence is the only segment of population where smoking is on the rise
- 11-14 is most frequent age for starting smoking
- 1 in 7 smoke on a daily basis (use of marijuana/ drinking closely associated with daily tobacco use)
- 80% of adolescents who smoke have less than a C average

VIOLENCE

- 1 million-plus adolescents per year are victims of violent crime, 400,000 while at school
- 1 in 5 are victims of an act of violence in or around school; 6,000 incidents per day or 1 in 6 seconds
- 22% express concern about being hurt by someone else in or around school
- 135,000 brings guns to school each day; 1 in 3 bring some weapon to school at least once per month
- Median age for acquiring a handgun is 12-15 yrs. of age

*Adapted from Surgeon General Dr. Antonia Novella , March 15, 1992.

Characteristics of Young Adolescent Development

SOCIAL

- Concerns with "fitting in"
- Experimentation with alcohol, drug, or sexual activity in order to obtain/maintain friends, humiliate parents, and counteract fears of worthlessness
- Low self-esteem
- Overuse of denial of consequences when taking risks
- Exaggerated use of imitating role models
- Require structure, although reject and fight against it
- Socializing with friends takes precedence over grades and other former interests
- Crave time alone

EMOTIONAL

- Transition from obedience to rebellion
- Rejection of parental guidelines
- Underlying need to please adults
- Hero worship/crushes
- Values/good behavior in exchange for rewards
- Boy/girl fantasies
- Present oriented rather than future oriented
- Overreaction to relatively minor incidents, often having to do with appearance and acceptance
- Variations in appearance from peers results in undue self-criticism
- Complains of psychosomatic symptoms

PHYSICAL

- Rapid, uneven growth spurts (height, weight gain, muscle growth)
- Variations between increased and decreased appetite
- Undue attention to weight (80% of girls, 39% boys worry about weight or strength; may lead to use of weight reduction methods, anorexia, bulimia, or steroid use)
- Greater nutrient needs, but poor dietary habits (fast foods, snacks)
- Fatigue and growing pains
- Discomfort when sitting for long periods of time
- Considerable individual differences
- Show self-consciousness in learning new skills

Supporting the Discipline Process

Identity: Young adolescence is a period when young adolescents begin to assert their independence and establish their own identity. Discipline problems within the family are greatly reduced when behaviors typical of young adolescents are understood and families hold age-appropriate expectations of their children. Understanding facts about America's adolescents assists families in gaining a perspective about the challenges faced by today's youth. (see "Facts About America's Young Adolescents")

Developmental stages: Knowing the developmental stages of early adolescence will give families guidelines for evaluating behavior (see "Characteristics of Young Adolescent Development"). Sometimes families are concerned about a particular behavior only to discover that their child's action is typical for young adolescents. Families' expectations may be unrealistic for their child's developmental stage.

Consistency provides children with stability and makes it possible for them to predict the consequences of their behavior when acting in appropriate and inappropriate ways (see "Steps in Establishing a Pattern of Consistency" and "Process for Setting Limits").

Rules: Children need an understanding that they are cared for and, in turn, are expected to care for others. They need structure, stability, and a clear belief system. Youngsters need to know that there is right and wrong and give and take and that they are expected to function within family guidelines according to rules on which they and their families, whenever possible, mutually agree. They need to realize that rules are a fact of life in order to have a safe and orderly society. Abiding by family rules is part of learning to behave appropriately in society (see "Disciplining in Positive Ways" and "Tips for Dealing with Aggression").

Responsibility is a process of making choices and accepting the consequences of making those choices. Young adolescents do not learn responsibility all alone or all at once; it must be taught (see "Improving Problem Solving and Decision Making" in "Teachers and Coaches" section).

Natural consequences are those that permit children to learn from circumstances that happen naturally. Logical consequences are those arranged by an adult that permit children to learn from circumstances directly related to their behavior. In other words, the consequences must fit the behavior in a logical way (see "Differences Between Punishment and Natural Consequences").

Communication stoppers: During the period of young adolescence, communication between and among family members may be difficult. Use of sarcasm or teasing may be used in fun but can have a detrimental effect on the young adolescent. These communication stoppers have a negative effect on the relationship and send messages such as, "I'm in control! I don't accept you! You're not capable! You're wrong!"(see "Roadblocks to Positive Communication" and "Communication Stoppers")

Steps in Establishing a Pattern of Consistency

Families should:

- Establish household and homework rules with input from the early adolescent.
- Explain reasons for rules, rewards for following them, and the consequences of breaking them.
- Post the rules, rewards, and consequences.
- Be consistent in enforcing the rules and providing either rewards or consequences.
- Promote two-way communication by providing time for feedback on the rules both to and from the young adolescent.
- Periodically re-evaluate the rules, rewards, and consequences with your young adolescent.

Process for Setting Limits

Families should:

- Explain the reason for the limit (rule).
- Discuss it with the young adolescent to be sure he or she understands the limit.
- Involve the child, whenever possible, in setting the limits.
- Be reasonable in determining limits.
- Be firm and fair in enforcing the limits.
- Be consistent in enforcing the limits.
- Provide praise and criticism of the child's behavior, and not of the person.
- Change the limits as the child's interests and abilities change.

Disciplining in Positive Ways: Tips That Work

1. Love your child and expect good behavior.
2. Set a good example. Young adolescents learn more from how families behave than from what families say.
3. Set limits for your young adolescent's behavior with a very few rules. Stress "dos," not "don'ts."
4. Seek your young adolescent's input and ideas when establishing rules. Increase responsibility and decrease rules as your child demonstrates the ability to accept additional responsibilities.
5. Be consistent. A few rules always enforced are more effective than many rules enforced sporadically.
6. If your young adolescent has trouble accepting responsibilities, re-evaluate and revise rules so that completion is possible and a feeling of self-worth enhanced.
7. Praise good behavior and accomplishments. Separate behavior from the person. Try to ignore inappropriate behavior unless it is destructive, dangerous, or harmful to others.
8. Listen to your child.
9. Help him or her talk through problems.
10. Encourage independence. Let them select and purchase their own clothes within family guidelines.
11. Let children contribute to the making of family decisions (outings, entertainment, expenditures). They are more likely to learn good decision-making skills when given the opportunity to participate.
12. Make sure children understand household rules and the consequences for breaking them.
13. Be consistent and act quickly when your young adolescent misbehaves or acts irresponsibility. Try to improve/change only one behavior at a time.
14. Avoid criticism and nagging. Offer praise and positive suggestions that support your young adolescent's fragile self-esteem.
15. You are the adult. Avoid power struggles. Discipline is not a game in which there are winners and losers.
16. A sense of humor can work wonders with your young adolescent and help you to keep your perspective about what is really important.
17. Do unto your children as you would have them do unto you. Build your relationships on a foundation of respect, courtesy, and love.

Tips for Dealing with Aggression

DO...

Listen.
Write down what they say.
When they calm down, ask them what else is bothering them.
Exhaust their list of complaints.
Ask them to clarify any specific complaints that are too general
Show them the list and ask if it is complete.
Ask them for suggestions for solving any of the problems they've listed.
Write down the suggestions.
As much as possible, mirror their body posture during this process.
As they speak louder, you speak softer.

DON'T...

Argue
Defend or become defensive
Promise things you can't produce.
Own problems that belong to others.
Raise your voice.
Belittle or minimize the problem.
Use physical punishment.

Ways Physical Punishment Affects Young Adolescents

- Often their first impulse is to escape.
- They learn from families that violence is acceptable.
- They may feel demoralized and humiliated.
- They may develop low self-esteem.
- They may internalize anger and become shy and withdrawn.
- They may become aggressive – hitting, fighting and/or destroying something that belongs to someone else.

It has been estimated that physical punishment is used as a form of discipline in over 80% of the families in the United States. Although spanking and other forms of hitting often seem to get quick results, they are usually ineffective in the long run and can do more harm than good.

Difference Between Punishment and Natural and Logical Consequences

Consequences

1. Involve no element of moral judgment.
2. Are concerned only with what will happen now.
3. Promote friendly relationship and atmosphere with minimum resentment.
4. Develop intrinsic motivation and self discipline.
5. Don't involve submission or humiliation.
6. Are thoughtful and deliberate.
7. Let young adolescent feel important.
8. Use action.
9. Disengage the adult from negative involvement with child.
10. Imply that young adolescent can work out own problems

Punishment

1. Inevitably involves some moral judgment.
2. Deals with the past.
3. Promotes anger (overtly or covertly) and frequently resentment.
4. Depends on external motivation.
5. Often requires submission or humiliation.
6. Is often impulsive
7. Leaves young adolescent feeling belittled.
8. Uses talking and coercion.
9. Promotes negative interaction between adult and child.
10. Implies that only adult is capable of solving young adolescent problems.

Roadblocks to Positive Communication

1. **Ordering, directing, commanding** (telling the other person what to do)
   "You are *not* quitting school."
   "Don't talk to me like that!"
   "Quit moping around and clean up your room."

2. **Warning, threatening** (telling the person what will happen if he or she doesn't do something)
   "If you don't sit still, I'm going to give you something that will make you wish you had."
   "If you do that, you'll be sorry!"

3. **Moralizing, preaching** (telling the person what they ought to do)
   "You must always be kind to animals."
   "You must always take care of your little brother."
   "It's not nice to act like that."

4. **Advising, suggesting** (telling the other person how to solve a problem)
   "Maybe you can find some new friends."
   "It would be best for you to drop that course."

5. **Persuading with logic, arguing, lecturing** (presenting facts, opinions, and other information to influence the other person)
   "If you learn to study now, you'll get better grades when you go to college."
   "If you drop out of school now, you won't be able to get a decent-paying job."

6. **Judging, criticizing** (finding fault with something the other person is doing. You may blame the person, say something is wrong, disagree, or judge the person)
   "If you had been more careful, this wouldn't have happened."
   "You're not thinking clearly."
   "You are wrong about that."

7. **Name calling, shaming** (making the other person feel foolish by calling him or her a name or ridiculing them)
   "You are acting like a little baby."
   "You are eating like a pig."
   "Look here, you big dummy."

8. **Interpreting, diagnosing, analyzing** (telling the other person what his or her motive is)
   "You feel that way because you're not doing well in school."
   "You are just saying that to upset me."
   "You're just jealous."

9. **Generalized praise, blanket approval, offering unwarranted and non-specific compliments.**
   "You really did well."
   "I'll go for that decision."

Communication Stoppers

VERBAL:

1. Ordering, directing, commanding (telling other people what to do).
2. Warning, threatening (telling a person what will happen if he or she doesn't do something).
3. Moralizing, preaching (telling a person what is the "right" thing to do).
4. Advising, suggesting.
5. Judging, criticizing.
6. Name calling, shaming.
7. Questioning, probing, interrogating.
8. Distracting, being sarcastic, humoring.

NONVERBAL:

1. Lack of eye contact.
2. Physical abuse.
3. Looking disinterested.
4. Pouting.
5. Leaving the room (or area).
6. Watching TV or continuing an activity as someone is talking to you.

Nonverbal Communication

Communication in today's world is restricted to what is spoken. Nonverbal communication occurs constantly and in almost every interaction. Typical ways that we communicate without speaking are through:

- Posture (e.g., hands on hips and a stiff forward-learning stance)
- Gestures
- Facial expressions
- Voice inflection and tone
- Breathing

When there is incongruity between verbal and nonverbal messages, the nonverbal will usually be assumed correct. The effects of nonverbal communication are illustrated by these statistics

- 7 percent of the total impact of the message is attributed to words spoken.
- 23 percent of the message is communicated by voice inflection.
- 70 percent of the message is communicated through other nonverbal behavior, primarily facial expression or by what is sometimes called "face language."

Sometimes families say one thing, but their facial expression, body language, and/or tone of voice indicate something different. This can be confusing to children.

Families not only need to be aware of how their nonverbal messages affect a child, but also need to pay attention to nonverbal cues from their children. Facial and eye expressions, hand and body gestures, posture, and tone of voice all communicate feelings and meanings. Being a good listener requires paying attention to messages being communicated without words.

My Blueprint for Improving My Parent-Child Relationships

1. In my parent-child relationship, I am specifically concerned that _____

2. My usual response to this specific parent-child relationship concern includes one or more of the following: {Place a check mark beside the concern(s) you consider most unacceptable.}

__ Talking, lecturing __ Getting angry __ Threatening, yelling, warning
__ Staring, nagging __ Analyzing __ Criticizing
__ Giving orders/commands __ Punishing, removing privileges, shaming
__ Other _____

3. I believe that, during the past week in my own parent-child relationship, I:

	More	Less	About the same
Acted more calmly	___	___	___
Acted instead of reacted	___	___	___
Acted firmly and kindly	___	___	___
Listened	___	___	___
Encouraged rather than discouraged	___	___	___
Communicated love and mutual respect	___	___	___
Withdrew from conflict that didn't involve me	___	___	___
Used natural and logical consequences	___	___	___
Stimulated responsible decision making	___	___	___
Enjoyed my parent-child relationship	___	___	___

4. The atmosphere in our family has changed to one of:

	More	Less	About the same
Friendliness	___	___	___
Mutual respect	___	___	___
Understanding	___	___	___
Tension and strife	___	___	___
Involvement	___	___	___
Self-discipline	___	___	___
Planning and working together	___	___	___
Fun with family members	___	___	___
Confusion	___	___	___

5. This week I learned:

6. I plan to change my parent-child behavior by:

Families as Teachers/Coaches

4.

Key concept

- Understanding and identifying how families can support learning at home. Families can teach their young adolescent to improve study habits, become more self confident, and solve problems effectively.

Outcomes

1. Families will learn how to support the learning process.
2. Families will learn ways to encourage their child.
3. Families will learn ways to understand their role in building self-esteem.
4. Families will learn ways to improve problem solving and decision making skills.

Keys to implementation

The concept of family as teachers/coaches consists of ways in which families can serve as teacher/coach. Families are the child's first teacher and the family continues to teach throughout the child's life. Through a commitment to learning and by supporting the learning process the family can almost guarantee the child's success in school.

Homework is a major source of conflict between parents and children as well as between school and home. The school can help parents understand the value of homework and assist parents in creating an environment that is conducive to learning. The pages "Characteristics of Successful Home Learning Environments" and "15 Ways to Help Your Young Adolescent Achieve Better in School" provide many helpful suggestions that teachers can share with families through newsletters, at conferences, or by telephone. There are a variety of ways to share such suggestions, but the most effective means is through one-on-one contact. Some parents do not realize that their own hectic life style prohibits their child from developing a study structure that allows the child to complete daily school work and special projects.

Furthermore, family members need to understand the value of consistently inquiring about school work by encouraging a recap of daily events, praising their child for work done well and in a timely manner, and being in regular contact with the teacher. The school can support the family in these endeavors by providing homework policies (see homework policy/guidelines sample). By establishing homework guidelines at the beginning of the year, many misunderstandings can be avoided. Having "homework tips" distributed at a school

open house and giving parents the opportunity to ask questions can get the year off to a good start. Schools should make accommodations for those families who do not or cannot come to meetings by mailing the information with a tear-off section so parents can indicate that they have read and understand the policy/guidelines.

Teachers need to develop assignments which avoid excessive drill, are interesting, and for which the student has all the prerequisite skills necessary for successfully completing the assignment. Many families complain about assignments that require them to teach things they themselves neither know nor understand. Teachers can provide homework assignments that require family interaction as suggested in the research of Joyce Epstein (1987; 1991). Many schools have reported improvement in the completion rate and quality of homework by instituting a Homework Hotline.

The reading students do outside of school significantly relates to reading achievement and school success. Research also reveals that many homes are void of reading materials, even newspapers and magazines. Parents can promote improved reading skills by encouraging reading of all kinds and modeling good reading habits. Schools can assist by making a variety of reading materials readily available to families. School can publicize age-appropriate reading lists and library information. Some schools have increased library hours and extended lending privileges to family members to encourage family reading.

Many schools report great success in implementing incentive reading programs such as "Book IT," sponsored by Pizza Hut, or Read at Home (RAH), a program that requires parents to sign a pledge to read and discuss a number of pages together each week. Schools have reported great success with a school-wide, 15-minute nightly reading homework assignment. Many schools have instituted "all school" reading times that model for students the value of reading regularly. These programs invite all people – janitors, secretaries, monitors – to read for a designated period of time during the school day.

Middle schoolers often interpret their self-worth based on verbal and nonverbal communication with family members. Self-esteem is a gift every family, rich or poor, can give their child(ren). Young adolescents who are nurtured, respected, encouraged, and loved have a better chance at being successful in school. Encouraging children by showing confidence in them, focusing on their contributions and strengths, and recognizing their efforts to improve can have a positive effect on their self-esteem. "Which One Are You?" the poem included in this section is a good read-aloud for a parent meeting or to send home.

Self-worth is an issue particularly critical to young adolescents who are subject to numerous outside influences. Families can continue to play significant roles by using strategies and materials such as those suggested in this section of the handbook. "Acts of Encouragement" provides several helpful suggestions for parents. Encouraging and fostering a good sense of self is easier if family members demonstrate feelings of self-worth. Families with high self-esteem are much more likely to rear children with high self-esteem. Families with less than a high school education are twice as likely to feel awkward about approaching school personnel than are those who are college educated (Metropolitan Life Survey, 1987).

Educators have recognized that there is a strong link between self-concept and performance in school. Young adolescents who feel good about themselves are more likely to enjoy school, make friends, make healthy choices, and have fewer problems. Those with low self esteem are more likely to feel hopeless, exhibit at-risk behaviors,

do poorly in school, use drugs and alcohol, engage in sexual activity at an earlier age, join gangs, run away from home more frequently, and generally experience more unhappiness.

Given these factors, how can families encourage their children to develop healthy self-esteem? "Assessing Your Young Adolescent's Self-Concept " in this section provides an easy assessment for parents. Communicating self-worth is something all families can learn to do better. This section provides twenty suggestions for encouraging a positive self-concept. Use this list as a handout or discussion piece during parent/student/teacher conferences.

Regardless of their family characteristics, parents care about their children's progress in school and want to know how to assist their children (Epstein, 1987). Another way to help children succeed in school is to teach them to be good problem solvers. Schools can provide families with opportunities to coach their child in solving problems. Possessing this skill, young adolescents may make wiser decisions regarding drug usage, premarital sex, and other life-altering decisions.

Problem solving is the ability to take what you know or can find out and come up with a solution to a problem. Problem solving is the foundation for helping people to accomplish their life goals. One way children learn to solve problems is by watching adults solve problems and then discussing the process with the adults. It is important for children to be given the opportunity to solve problems.

Teachers can provide opportunities for children and families to solve problems together by providing questions to discuss such as: 1)What happened? 2) Why didn't your idea work? 3)What other way could this be done? 4) What would you change or try next? "Improving Problem Solving/Decision Making" and "Decisions I Have Made" are two handouts which may assist parents in efforts at coaching children to solve problems.

Some parents are going to have very limited problem solving ability themselves, therefore it is important the teacher choose problems that have real life value and lend themselves to the capabilities of such families. A small percentage of families may not be able to work with their child at all. This is the time to seek assistance from a Big Brother/Sister program, a school volunteer, or a mature student. Schools who have hired parent coordinators or have developed family resource rooms have found problem solving to be a skill which many families want to learn.

Today's business leaders want employees who can solve problems effectively. Families and schools working together can greatly enhance the potential for producing future problem solvers. Schools which have used home/school problem-solving activities report that their students show improved academic skills in many areas.

What the best and wisest parents want for their own child must be what the educational community wants for all its children.

— John Dewey

15 Ways to Help Your Young Adolescent Succeed Better in School

Communicate better study habits to your child by:

1. Providing a consistent sleep schedule. (Young adolescents need eight or more hours of sleep.)
2. Providing a well-balanced diet.
3. Establishing a schedule that permits ample time to get ready for school and results in a timely arrival at school.
4. Encouraging them to set aside time for daily homework and reading.
5. Providing a quiet, comfortable place without distractions to study.
6. Encouraging them to make wise television viewing choices.
7. Asking in a variety of ways about daily homework assignments.
8. Comparing your child's progress to his/her abilities, not to siblings or other children.
9. Praising your child when homework/responsibilities are completed.
10. Creating a Homework Survival Kit. (assignment notebook, pencil, paper, pencil sharpener, eraser, scissors, dictionary, calculator, ruler, flat surface)
11. Telling your young adolescent you expect him/her to do homework independently, but you are available if help is needed.
12. Providing transportation to the library or other resource areas when assignments require reference materials.
13. Providing a place where completed work may be stored safely (a folder, a shelf, or a drawer).
14. Discussing homework assignments and providing hints when necessary.
15. Becoming actively involved in homework when teachers have requested family/student interaction.

Characteristics of Successful Home Learning Environments

1. **Establishing a Daily Family Routine**
   - Providing time, space, quiet, and materials for child's studying, reading, and hobbies
   - Assigning chores and regular household tasks
   - Encouraging good health habits: proper balance of rest and activity, regular breakfast and dinner schedules, good nutrition, health care as needed.

2. **Monitoring Out-of-School Activities**
   - Guiding the constructive use of leisure time: after-school activities, use of TV, and time with friends
   - Setting clear rules and standards
   - Discussing rules with child
   - Rewarding success and applying sanctions appropriately and consistently

3. **Modeling the Value of Learning and Hard Work**
   - Setting an example by reading at home and engaging in other learning activities
   - Encouraging effort for long-term gains vs. short-term benefits
   - Playing games together (e.g. Scrabble, Monopoly, Dominoes) that require planning ahead and problem solving rather than pure luck
   - Communicating openly and encouraging verbal give-and-take

4. **Expressing High but Realistic Expectations for Achievement**
   - Setting developmentally appropriate goals and standards for child's conduct
   - Discussing regularly topics concerning education, careers, life skills, rules
   - Affirming personal worth through positive messages and affirming the child as a winner

5. **Encouraging the Child's Overall Development and Progress in School**
   - Cultivating a warm and supportive home atmosphere
   - Expressing interest in child's education both at home and by attending school events
   - Urging child to work hard in school
   - Staying in touch with child's teachers
   - Expressing affection and approval
   - Noticing and rewarding achievement in school

6. **Reading, Writing, and Discussion among Family Members**
   - Reading and listening to children read
   - Discussions of school day, family members' lives, and current events
   - Storytelling, recounting experiences, and sharing problem-solving strategies
   - Writing of all kinds (e.g., grocery lists, telephone messages, letters, diary entries)
   - Relating everyday experiences to what is being learned in school and using these experiences as teaching opportunities

7. **Using Community Resources to Meet Family Needs**
   - Exposing children to cultural activities (e.g., visits to library, museum, movies, concerts)
   - Enrolling children in youth enrichment programs (e.g., after-school sports or lessons, community programs, clubs)
   - Introducing children to responsible mentors (e.g., coaches, counselors, friends, staff of local organizations or churches)

Homework Tips

1. Ask about homework each day, even if there is none, asking conveys interest and caring about your child and school work.

2. If/when homework is forgotten encourage contacting classmates or Homework Hotline so that work can be completed. If no help is available be certain that your child suffers the logical consequences.

3. Provide a quiet family time each day when children are expected to do homework or read. Modeling quiet time will help establish reading and/or homework as a habit.

4. Tell your child that you expect him/her to complete homework independently; however you will be happy to check it or provide help if he/she becomes stuck. If you are unable to help, encourage calling a friend or as a last resort the teacher for clarification/help.

5. Establish a place where completed homework and/or other items which are needed for school can be kept safe and visible for the next school day.

6. Become actively involved in homework when teachers have asked for family input/interaction.

7. Provide study/homework supplies and have them in a place where they are easily accessible so valuable study time is not wasted on searching for a pencil, paper, etc.

8. Praise and encourage your child for homework and study efforts.

Acts of Encouragement

Encouragement is given to inspire or help others. Research has increasingly emphasized the importance of nonverbal communication. So very often in interpersonal relations, it isn't so much what we say as it is what we do. **Actions do speak louder than words**. Whether with a child, a friend, or a spouse, it is what we do that reveals our basic intentions. We may even fool ourselves with rationalizations, such as "I've been so busy, I just forgot," or "I really should have written, but..." whatever we may say, the lack of action is clear to the one for whom it is intended.

If our intention is to encourage, inspire, support, or help your young adolescents to have confidence in themselves, to be self-reliant, to have the courage to be imperfect, we can show this by what we do. The following are some examples of acts of encouragement.

1. When your child is trying to accomplish something on his/her own for the first time, allow the young adolescent to learn by mistakes as well as successes without comment, evaluation, or intervention by you unless requested. Then give the help requested willingly, but without "taking over."
2. When you are playing a competitive game with your young adolescent, check your own motives, i.e., do you want to win at all costs or is it to enjoy the event, win or lose. The latter can be encouraging; the former, in which only the outcome counts, is discouraging.
3. When you enjoy being with your child or appreciate their help, show it by a smile, a hug, or other nonverbal reaching-out behavior that he/she can understand.
4. When your child is slower, messy, or doing or being different from you, be patient, be kind, keep yourself busy with other matters until he/she catches up or finishes.
5. When your child errs or causes an accident, allow him or her to correct the mistake, clean up the mess, or whatever without reprisal. For a very discouraged young adolescent, volunteer in a friendly manner to help. Teach friendliness and cooperation by example.
6. When your child is discouraged, help him/her know that he/she has a place in the family by assigning helpful jobs or giving nonverbal personal attention (e.g., saving special stamps for the stamp collector, buying a charm for a bracelet, taking time to watch them or be with the child, or join in something he/she enjoys).

Children often interpret their self-worth and value based on verbal and nonverbal communication with families. Families become a mirror in which children see themselves. Children who are told they are bad, lazy, messy, stupid, etc., tend to see themselves in that way and behave that way. On the other hand, children who regularly hear positive comments and know they are listened to and taken seriously will most likely feel good about themselves. Encouraging children by showing confidence in them, focusing on their contributions and assets, and recognizing their efforts and improvement will have a positive effect on their self-esteem.

Adapted from material by Thomas J. Sweeney, Ohio University.

Assessing Your Young Adolescent's Self-Concept

When self-concept is high, family members tend to support one another, feel close to each other, have good communication, and in general are satisfied with their life together.

Think about the following questions when you observe your young adolescent.

POSITIVE

Does your young adolescent demonstrate self-confidence by:

- Completing tasks he/she attempts?
- Showing excitement when attempting new things?
- Talking about dreams and ideas of what he/she will do when he/she grows up?
- Sharing things he/she likes about him/herself?
- Showing pride in who he/she is (family identity)?

NEGATIVE

Does your young adolescent demonstrate lack of self-confidence by:

- Becoming easily frustrated and upset with even simple tasks?
- Quitting or giving up before tasks are completed?
- Setting goals far beyond his/her ability level?
- Criticizing him/herself and others often?
- Lacking the ability to praise self and others?

Improving Your Young Adolescent's Self-Esteem

1. Make time to talk to your child daily.
2. Provide time to listen and be listened to.
3. Hug/hold often.
4. Spend time with your child daily.
5. Praise often and sincerely.
6. Treat each other with respect.
7. Encourage and support your child's interests.
8. Set a good example by demonstrating values of respect for learning, respect for the rights of others, honesty, and fairness.
9. Organize household schedules and responsibilities so that your young adolescent has at least one "chore."
10. Share your own growing up experiences, failures, and successes.
11. Be consistent and set clear, reasonable limits.
12. Provide privacy for your young adolescent and respect it.
13. Show interest in your young adolescent's friends.
14. Allow your young adolescent to express feelings of anger or hurt in an appropriate way.
15. Talk about successes and joys.
16. Share family history, point out ancestors' successes.
17. Look for something you can share with your child: a hobby, a book, a task.
18. Answer your young adolescent's questions honestly and age appropriately.
19. Celebrate regularly.
20. Help your child set goals.

Which One is You?

"Two A's are good," the small boy cried
His voice was filled with glee.
His father very bluntly asked,
"Why didn't you get three?"

"Mom, I've got the dishes done,"
The girl called from the door.
Her mother very calmly said,
"And did you sweep the floor?"

"I've mowed the grass," the tall boy said.
"And put the mower away."
His father asked him with a shrug,
"Did you clean off the clay?"

The children in the house next door
Seem happy and content.
The same things happened over there
But this is how they went:

"Two A's are good," the small boy cried
His voice was filled with glee.
His father proudly said, "That's great!"
"I'm glad you live with me."

"Mom, I've got the dishes done,"
The girl called from the door.
Her mother smiled and softly said,
"Each day I love you more."

"I've mowed the grass," the tall boy said.
"And put the mower away."
His father answered with much joy,
"You've made my happy day."

Children deserve encouragement
For tasks they're asked to do.
If they're to lead a happy life,
So much depends on you!

— Anonymous

Improving Problem Solving/Decision Making

Problem-solving steps:

1. State the problem clearly.
2. Brainstorm solutions; gather information.
3. Consider alternatives.
4. Consider consequences. Look for both positive and negative consequences. What do you know from other experiences that might help?
5. Consider the feelings and values. Do they match your family values?
6. Choose a solution. Make sure you can give reasons for your choice.
7. Take action. Decide what you will do, when you will do it, and how you will do it. Without this action step, the decision is just a mental exercise.
8. Evaluate. If the problem is not satisfactorily resolved, you may need to go back to step 3 and choose another alternative.

Decisions I Have Made

Think of decisions you have made this week. Write about them below.

1. A decision that made you happy: _____
   _____
2. A decision that made you feel uncomfortable: _____
   _____
3. A decision that was very easy to make: _____
   _____
4. A decision that was very hard to make: _____
   _____
5. A decision that you made but haven't followed through on: _____
   _____

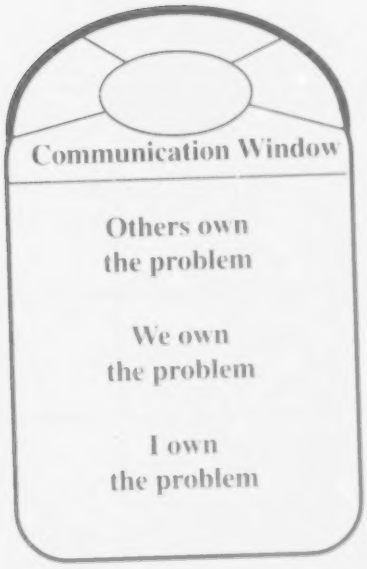
Rules of Brainstorming

The term *brainstorming* has become a part of contemporary vocabulary. It is often used, however, to apply to almost any occasion when two or more people discuss an idea. As originally proposed, however, the concept required that the following set of rules be followed:

1. **Express no negative evaluation of any idea presented.**
2. **Work for quantity, not quality; the longer the list of ideas, the better.**
3. **Expand on each other's ideas; piggyback, elaborate whenever possible.**
4. **Encourage zany, far-out ideas.**
5. **Record each idea, at least by a key word or phrase.**
6. **Set a time limit and hold strictly to it.**
7. **Stick to the topic of discussion.**

Who Owns the Problem?

The person who is bothered the most by the problem owns the problem. Who is feeling upset? Ask this question: "Is the problem mine, ours, or someone else's?



The communication window helps us determine who owns the problem. All communications and situations can fit one of the window panes above. How we feel about the problem/situation is, of course, influenced by our values.

"Others" own the problem: If the problem belongs to others, then we use facilitative responses that encourage others to talk. Example: "It seems like you are pretty upset right now," or "You sound like you have made up your mind about this issue." This kind of summarizing or clarifying helps the person organize what he/she said and to determine whether it is really how he/she feels. "Why" questions tend to close conversations but "who, what, when or how" questions are considered open-ended and tend to promote further communication. Example: "What is it that you need (or want)?" Interpreting and analyzing the problem for others tends to cause others to be defensive and is considered a low facilitative skill. The lowest facilitative skill is giving advice. Reassuring and supporting are acceptable to a degree.

Low Facilitative Responses

Advising and evaluating

"If I were you . . . . . _____."

"Why don't you . . . . . _____."

"I think you ought to. . . . . _____."

Analyzing and interpreting

"The reason you . . . . . _____."

"I know why you . . . . . _____."

Reassuring and supporting

"Don't worry. . . . . _____."

"You don't have to feel . . . _____."

Why questions

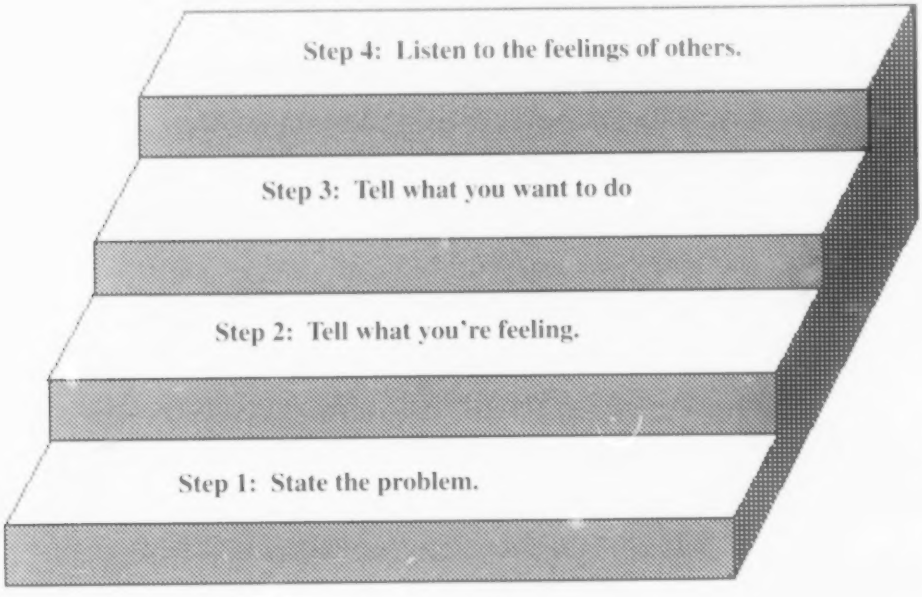
"Why _____?"

"Why _____?"

"Why _____?"

Good communication skills, listening for feelings, and sending a straight message all will help you spend more time on "others own the problem."

"I" own the problem. When I own the problem, I need to send clear messages about how I feel, what I feel like doing and then listen to the feelings of others.


Step 4: Listen to the feelings of others.
Step 3: Tell what you want to do
Step 2: Tell what you're feeling.
Step 1: State the problem.

Four Steps to Follow When "I" Own the Problem

Step 1 example: "Yesterday I wanted to watch MTV and mom wouldn't let me."
Step 2 example: "I really felt angry toward my mom."
Step 3 example: "I wanted to sneak around and watch MTV anyway!"
Step 4 example: "How would mom feel if I had watched anyway?"

"We" own the problem. When we both own the problem, we must be willing to find a common ground on which to communicate. We need to listen for our feelings and send clear messages. We must go back to the eight problem-solving steps called the "no-lose" method.

1. I define the problem in terms of my needs. You define the problem in terms of your needs.
2. We define and understand our shared problem.
3. We generate alternatives.
4. We discuss feelings and pros and cons of each alternative.
5. We select a solution that best fits our shared and individual needs.
6. We develop a plan of action: "Who does what and when?"
7. We set a time to evaluate our solution.
8. If it is not working, we go back to step no. 4 and repeat the process.

5. Families as Supporters, Volunteers, and Audience

5.

Key concept

- Families are most frequently involved as *supporters* (raising funds and working at school events), *volunteers* (assisting in various ways in schools and on field trips), and *audience* (attending special events and performances). However, families may become involved in their child's education by taking on roles outside the classroom and at home. Schools should assist families by suggesting ways they can act as supporters, volunteers, and audience in new and meaningful ways.

Outcomes

- An increase in the number of families who serve as supporters, audience, and volunteers in schools.
- Families will realize and understand various ways in which they can be involved as supporters, audience, and volunteers at home and at school.

Keys to implementation

Studies have shown that as students move into the middle grades, involvement by family members in school decreases. Young adolescents often want parents and families involved in school, just as long as it's in another classroom! However, middle level schools can support family involvement by providing an environment that encourages participation in various ways.

The most common type of family involvement is as supporters, volunteers, and audience. Although schools welcome help with fund-raisers and attendance at special events, there are many other ways in which families can become engaged in their children's formal education. Schools must plan carefully to orchestrate a program to effectively meet the needs of students, schools, and families. Schools should consider these five broad areas when planning a parent/family involvement program: survey families, provide orientation, offer multiple opportunities, create a welcome environment, and show appreciation. Ideas for implementing each of these five components follow.

1. A survey of families should be conducted at the opening of school each year to identify ways in which family members would like to help. They can complete the survey when they register their young adolescent or when other paperwork is completed. Appoint a parent volunteer or other staff member to categorize the responses (library helpers, field trip sponsors, computer aids, etc.). Contact each person who has expressed an interest in any area. ALWAYS be sure to follow up on ALL responses. Many schools have lost opportunities because they failed to contact parents after the initial survey was given and thus further alienated parents. (Sample surveys are included in this section.)
2. Host an orientation session for each type of volunteer.
   a) At the meeting establish rules/guidelines for participation. Provide a handbook that includes guidelines and other helpful information about the role and expectations of each responsibility.
   b) With the administrator's guidance, solicit leadership from the group so that it can function independently. Leaders from each group would also be part of a volunteer council which would meet regularly to deal with concerns or needed changes.
   c) For volunteer tasks done in non-school hours, provide written guidelines to accompany the request including its purpose, time frame, expectations, and school contact person.
3. Provide multiple opportunities for families to be supporters and audience for their young adolescent.
   a) Avoid featuring only the "stars" in performances. Make opportunities available for all students to be part of a performance so that families can attend events that include their child. For example, schedule team or group talent shows, academic improvement events, school plays, and intramural athletic events.
   b) Plan numerous social events that include families, such as school picnics, spaghetti dinners, fall festivals.
   c) Provide special events which require family participation, such as read-along night, game night, science fair workshop, creative writing workshop, or multicultural night.
   d) Inform families about how they can serve as room families. .
   e) Encourage families to help with behind-the scenes projects, making costumes, cutting, and stapling.
   f) Enlist families as volunteer aides in school or non-school hours, by reading to students, tutoring one-on-one, assisting with homework, etc.

g) Publish a list of services and involvement activities that could be done at home or on the weekends for families whose work schedules prohibit them from participating in school events. (See "20 Ways Working Parents Can Volunteer" later in this section.)

h) Provide opportunities for working parents to support the school through Saturday or take-home projects such as painting games on black top, cutting out materials, and building backdrops for a play. Build your volunteer program on the premise that most families have the desire and ability to help in some way.

4. Provide a welcome environment in the school for family members.

a) Make name tags or special "I'm a volunteer" pins to identify assistants. These help identify approved aides while adding prestige to the job.

b) For school and classroom volunteers, arrange a place in the school where families can congregate, have coffee, and work together. If space is a problem, solicit support from the staff to share the teachers' lounge.

c) Offer child care whenever possible. Make arrangements with area high schools or community college child care programs to provide care. For after school activities use scouts, student council, or other organizations who need service credits.

5. Recognize the contributions of all volunteers and supporters on a regular basis.

a) At least once each month show volunteers how much they are appreciated. Possibilities include providing a pot luck lunch, refreshments, certificates, letters of thanks, and names in the paper or school newsletter. For special events include family's names in large hearts (February) saying 'Thanks to the sweethearts of our school!" Develop a bulletin board with the title "Many Hands Make Light Work!" which displays volunteers' names on each hand. Always let volunteers know you are proud to have them as partners. Use the term "we."

b) Celebrate the contributions of ALL families who volunteer or provide other support. Having a sign-in procedure will help to ensure that all are recognized. Make certificates, have a "thank you" lunch provided by staff, host holiday teas, or have students write thank you notes. Show that their efforts, no matter how small, are appreciated.

c) Pass out bumper stickers with such messages as these: "I'm a family volunteer," "(School name) is great! "Families and schools as partners!"

d) Take plenty of photos/videos and provide news coverage of all events and of families in action. These serve as a strong testimonials and aid in recruitment of more volunteers.

Several forms are included in this section that may assist teachers, administrators, and parent coordinators in eliciting and increasing family involvement in their middle schools. Before beginning any program it is important to understand the perspective of those within your school. For some family members there are barriers that prevent them from participating in schools. The "Strategies to Overcoming Family Involvement Barriers," provided in the first section of this handbook, highlights some of the issues which may inhibit families from active participation in their child's education. A worksheet for developing family support is included.

Middle schools that have used the "Family/Family Member Survey" have found it particularly helpful in generating a pool of volunteers and in identifying specific needs that parents and family members may have. Through this survey schools have also increased the number of family members who are willing to offer assistance with specific classroom, team, or school needs. The "Teacher Survey" that follows lists similar categories so that the responses of families and the needs of teachers can be quickly matched. These surveys also list ways that family members may assist in non-school hours, thus maximizing the potential to build true home-school partnerships.

There is also a handout for school officials and parent coordinators to assist them in structuring programs to utilize volunteers effectively. Some schools and classroom teachers have experienced difficulties in dealing with overzealous parents or those who become disinterested because they feel awkward or that their efforts are not appreciated. Teachers and schools need to communicate clear expectations for volunteers and create a welcome environment so family members will be comfortable. The pages "Keys to Effective School Volunteer Programs" and "24 Ways Volunteers Can Help In Middle Schools" can serve as ready-made handouts for use in establishing a volunteer program. Additional aides may be found in the policy section under "Keys to Families as Decision Makers and Advocates."

Working parents or those whose commitments do not allow them to participate in regular scheduled events still need to feel that they can contribute. The handout "20 Ways Working Parents Can Volunteer" provides ideas on ways family members, grandparents, and retirees who are unable to come to school can become involved.

For classroom teachers there is a handout on how to utilize resource persons so that both teachers and guests have positive, productive experiences that promote learning.

Family/Family Member Survey

Dear Family/ Family Member:

In order to best meet the needs of your early adolescent, we need your assistance. Please help us form a home/echo partnership by responding to the following questions.

1. From what source would you like to receive information about the school?
   —Newsletter —Friend —Media (TV and Radio)
   —Student —Newspaper —Teacher
   —Principal —Other _____

2. Would you be interested in becoming involved in our family organization?
   —Yes —No
   Would you be interested in being a school volunteer? —Yes —No
   If yes, check on what day(s) and time(s) would you be available?

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
9:00- 11:00 A.M.	—	—	—	—	—
10:00- 12:00 NOON	—	—	—	—	—
1:00- 3:00 P.M.	—	—	—	—	—

   If yes, check the way you would like to help in the school.
   —Office —Telephone —Tutoring
   —Assist in classroom/with teams —Library aide —Chaperone events
   —Photocopy, ditto aide —Help with team celebrations
   —Computer work —Newsletter —Serve on committees

   If yes, check how you would be willing to help in the classroom.
   —Helping study groups —Chaperoning field trips
   —Making bulletin boards —Making visuals (charts, games)
   —Checking homework/workbooks —Supervising learning activities
   —Assisting with service learning —Tutoring (individuals or small groups)
   —Assisting with team events/advisory —Other

Family/Family Member Survey (continued)

3. Would you be interested in attending classes or workshops?

—Yes Day or Evening (circle one) —No

If yes, check possible topics.

—Parenting skills
—Drug/AIDS information
—Reading class
—Using new technologies
—Communication skills
— Other interests

4. Would you be willing to help with special projects/activities?

—Science or history fair
—Book fair
—Team activities
—Service learning activities
—Field trips
—Dinners or fund raisers
—Teach special skills or activities (please list)
—Share a hobby or present career information
—Create data bases or rrganize materials
—Other

5. Do you have any suggestions of how families could help?

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ Work Phone _____

_____

Best time to contact _____

Teacher Survey

Dear Teacher:

In order to best utilize the skills of family volunteers, we need your help. Please answer the following questions to assist us in forming a home/school partnership.

1. From what source would you like the school to provide information to families?

—Newsletter
—Child
—Principal
—Friend
—Media
—Newspaper
—Teacher
—Other

2. Would you be interested in having a school volunteer?

—Yes —No

If yes, check on what day(s) and time(s) would you prefer a volunteer?

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
9:00- 11:00 A.M.	—	—	—	—	—
10:00- 12:00 NOON	—	—	—	—	—
1:00- 3:00 P.M.	—	—	—	—	—

If yes, check how you would like volunteers to help in school.

—Office
—Assist in classroom
—Xerox, ditto aide
—Newsletter
—Telephone
—Library aide
—Help with team celebrations
—Serve on committees
—Tutor
—Chaperone events
—Computer assistant

If yes, check how you would like volunteers to help in your classroom.

—Helping reading or math groups
—Making bulletin boards
—Checking homework/workbooks
—Assisting with service learning
—Assisting with team events/advisor
—Chaperoning field trips
—Making visuals (charts, games)
—Supervising learning areas or projects
—Tutoring (individuals or small groups)
—Other _____

Teacher Survey (continued)

3. Would you be interested in attending a workshop on how to effectively utilize volunteers?
   —Yes —No

4. With which of these would you like to have help?
   —Science or history fair
   —Book fair
   —Team activities
   —Service learning activities
   —Dinners or fund raisers
   —Teach special skills or activities (please list)
   —Share a hobby or present career information
   —Create data bases or rganize materials
   —Other _____

5. Would you be interested in becoming involved in our family organization?
   —Yes —No

6. Do you have other suggestions of how families could help?

Teacher's Name _____ Room Number _____

Tips for Effective School/Volunteer Programs

To make volunteers feel effective and welcome, the school staff should provide:

- An introduction to the school building, the staff, and a review of the unique needs of young adolescents.
- Training and guidelines for the work expected, such as, how to use the copy machine, video equipment, and computers.
- A clear understanding of school policies and role expectations, such as, discipline policy, attendance policy.
- Work space for the volunteers and safe storage for their belongings.
- Supplies needed to complete work expected.
- Identifying name tags or badges.
- Explanations and directions in easy-to-understand terms.
- Regular times to meet with volunteers for feedback and encouragement.
- Recognition and expressions of appreciation through school assemblies, notes, cards, certificates, special lunches, etc.
- Schedules/calendars of events.
- A clear match between volunteers and work expected.
- Relevant information about students that will assist the volunteers in their work.
- Professional treatment of volunteers.
- A volunteer substitute provision for those who must be absent.

Volunteers are dependable and loyal to the school when they:

- feel appreciated,
- have a variety of tasks which they perceive to be meaningful,
- have a feeling of being responsible, and
- feel their work is made more challenging and more responsible as they are able to manage it.

24 Ways Volunteers Can Help in Middle Level Schools

1. Make audio tapes or materials for young adolescents with visual or reading disabilities.
2. Assist non-English speaking students in expanding their vocabulary. Volunteers who speak foreign language can assist in translating.
3. Assist with hands-on classroom activities and/or lessons.
4. Gather resources to enhance culminating activities and/or interdisciplinary units.
5. Assist students in the library or computer lab.
6. Share special interests, hobbies, skills, careers, or talents to enhance learning opportunities
7. Contact community resources to supplement lessons/units.
8. Help students make up the work missed because of absence.
9. Supervise individual students and/or small groups who are working on independent projects.
10. Accompany students on field trips.
11. Assist with team or school-wide newsletters.
12. Organize special activities or incentives for students being rewarded for appropriate behavior.
13. Assist in supervision of service learning projects.
14. Solicit community partners for the school and teams. Develop a directory.
15. Serve as an adult friend/mentor for at-risk young adolescents.
16. Collect materials and resources for special lessons, units, or activities.
17. Sponsor school clubs or interest groups.
18. Accompany teachers on home visits.
19. Assist in science, math, computer, foreign langu ;ge, art, and other laboratory settings.
20. Assist in special classes providing drill and practice, enrichment, or individual assistance.
21. Provide technical assistance or staff development in areas of special skill.
22. Serve on advisory committees.
23. Develop a resource list of free, classroom-related materials, high interest books, guest speakers, and audiovisual resources.
24. Begin a data base or inventory of classroom materials.

20 Ways Working Parents Can Volunteer

1. Send/solicit resource materials for school when requested.
2. Prepare audio, video, or print materials to enhance lessons.
3. Organize details for special events and prepare an outline.
4. Make parent calls or community organization calls to solicit resources.
5. Enter data for special programs
6. Prepare materials for displays, bulletin boards or special projects.
7. Contact businesses for collaborative projects.
8. Be a resource volunteer for homework, assisting students in the evening or on weekends.
9. Serve on committees which meet at night, such as curriculum and policy making.
10. Prepare fliers for special events or type newsletters at home.
11. Serve as a reader or reviewer for materials to accompany units or special lessons.
12. Provide pick-up services for library or other community resources.
13. Scout out locations for field trips and provide information about those resources.
14. Serve as a writer/resource or typist for school newsletters or newspaper articles.
15. Provide technical assistance to teach computer skills to other parents or young adolescents.
16. Build and teach students to construct sets for dramatic presentations.
17. Design possible advertising or promotions for team or school events.
18. After consulting with school leadership, analyze systems to mainstream school processes or maximize resources.
19. Serve as mentors for "at risk" students or students with special aptitudes.
20. Assist with Saturday or holiday work crews to beautify school grounds or improve recreational facilities.

Tips for Using Resource Speakers

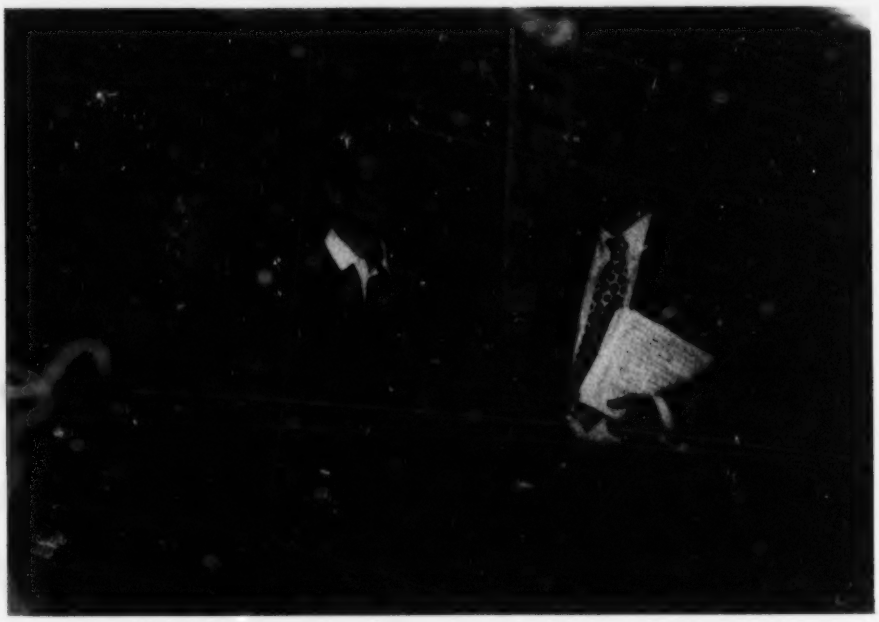
- Prepare students by
  - developing questions
  - discussing appropriate behavior
  - suggesting that guest may not be used to student audience.

- Prepare speakers by informing them about
  - the class behavior
  - demographics
  - special student concerns
  - objectives for the presentation
  - student attention span
  - best teaching strategies for topic and time allotted.

- Suggest that speakers
  - bring props
  - avoid long lectures and minute details
  - keep words simple and clear
  - show enthusiasm
  - understand characteristics of students today
  - be prepared for personal or unusual questions.

- Send thank you notes written by students.

6. Family, School, and Community as Partners



6.

Key concept

- Families, schools, and communities must collaborate in order to address positively the social, emotional, and physical needs of young adolescents. Schools can assist families and communities in recognizing the connection between student achievement and social and physical needs. By building partnerships, schools are better able to access appropriate human resources to meet students' health, safety, and physical needs.

Outcome

- Families, schools, and communities will learn to collaborate more effectively and utilize better support services for young adolescents and their families.

Keys to implementation

Families, teachers, community officials, and professionals from health and social service agencies all have important roles to play in the physical and emotional well being of young adolescents. We live in a complex and rapidly changing society. With limited resources, it is impossible for schools to provide for all the needs of today's young people. Greater numbers of children are exhibiting behaviors that affect the quantity and quality of their lives. In addition, the numbers of children with learning difficulties, physical challenges, and nutritional needs are increasing. Schools are expected to provide more services and fulfill more roles than ever before. The responsibilities assigned to schools require that personnel become more effective in the identification of needs and be able to coordinate the resources available for the families they serve.

When families experience the burdens of complex problems, young adolescents are profoundly affected. Families who have to deal with many issues often feel overwhelmed merely providing for the physical needs of their child. Basic needs simly have to supersede attention to higher order thinking, homework completion, or attention to social problems. Assisting families in making contact with agencies that can assist with all types of needs is a significant role schools can take that will ultimately benefit the young adolescents they serve.

School faculties are composed primarily of personnel from middle class backgrounds with middle class income and values. Schools need to recognize the level of problem-solving and language skills possessed by the families within their schools and realize that, for some, accessing services may pose a significant challenge. Schools can begin by identifying community resources such as counseling agencies, food pantries, service organizations that offer assistance, professionals with special services for children, local churches/temples/synagogues, home management groups, parent support groups, and federal and state agencies. Schools can make available lists of locations, phone numbers, and contact persons or can initiate contact with various agencies on behalf of a willing family member. Schools can develop student assistance teams or another support system to enable middle level students to remain in school. Schools can serve as the resource information provider to assist families with young adolescents who are "at-risk."

Schools can connect families with community-based programs that have a history of success and stable funding sources. Examples of specific programs in which schools and communities have collaborated include: a) DARE, staffed by local law-enforcement agencies and targeted toward middle-grades youth and drug prevention; b) "latch key" programs, sometimes coordinated by YMCA or by other organizations; c) public library programs with study areas and computer labs developed for children who need a quiet and safe environment for study; d) ALATEEN, developed as a support group for children of alcoholics to learn coping strategies; e) after school and summer programs, some of which are [illegible]'d by local park districts or by the Children's Defense Fund; f) conflict resolution and peer mediation, provided by university law schools across the country; g) employment concerns, housing, and crime prevention services offered by the National Urban League; g) DCFS programs, which provide protection, counseling, and alternative living arrangements for abused and neglected children ; h) cooperative extension offices, which offer support and education for families around a variety of circumstances; i) public health and mental health services which offer support and counseling for families; and j) National Committee for Citizens in Education, providing a variety of programs for bilingual parents (Parents/Citizens Bilingual Toll Free Helpline referral is 1-800-NETWORK). The Institute for Educational Leadership, Inc. leads a group of 22 national organizations concerned with connecting children and families with interagency services. This effort demonstrates the national attention being given to coordination of service provided to families.

Schools can identify formal and informal networks and make an effort to understand the barriers some face in obtaining support. Parents may need to have access to information and services for a number of reasons. They may have questions about their child's development, be concerned about their child's progress in school, suspect that their child is using drugs; be concerned about their child's choice of friends, or have other concerns.

Points to remember include:

- families have different support needs at different times
- support systems change as family needs change
- families often don't know what they need or how to ask for help
- there are many barriers what prohibit people from seeking, obtaining, and accepting help
- there are many informal support systems that are harder to identify than formal systems (families sometimes know these informal systems but need encouragement to access them)
- formal systems are often unfriendly, and families who need their services find them intimidating. School personnel can function as contact agents.

Materials contained within this section include pages that may serve as one-page handouts, supplements to newsletters, background information for advisory groups, or guidelines for discussion groups. "Facts About America's Young Adolescents" and "Characteristics of Young Adolescent Development" are quick references to highlight significant factors related to adolescent development. "Keys to Violence-Free Schools" and "Identifying Support Services" are handouts appropriate for school personnel as well as families and community members.

What our children really want from us is time. Opportunities to make a difference in our children's lives, when they still want our company and still want to listen to and talk to us, rarely knock twice. Families are important educators; education is bigger than schooling alone.

— Dorothy Rich

Keys to Violence-Free Schools: Families and Schools as Partners

- Help children build their self-esteem; praise, when warranted, and encourage your child.
- Challenge children with achievable goals.
- Learn how to listen to, spend time with, and talk with your child.
- Know your child's friends and their families.
- Get your child involved; promote attendance and involvement in activities.
- Keep commitments to your child – thereby build trust and expect truth.
- Teach your child to be a contributor at home by assigning him/her tasks.
- Monitor television and movie viewing to be sure programs are age-appropriate.
- Find a Big Brother or Big Sister program for your child.
- Help organize "safe school" programs.
- Volunteer to supervise hallways, playground and/or rest rooms.
- Help organize safe community-based entertainment for your teen.
- Chaperone school and neighborhood parties, skating rinks, or other places where children gather for fun.
- Provide rules and structure for your child. (You are the adult.)
- Set times for being home and limit the amount of unsupervised time.
- If firearms are present at all in the home, keep them locked up.
- Teach your child personal safety techniques. (Learn together.)
- Report suspicious individuals or activities around the school.
- Talk to your child about the law, consequences of weapon use, and violence.
- Promote peer mediation and other conflict resolution techniques in the school.
- Support the school's penalties for weapon possession and violent behavior.
- Learn about gang symbols and drug activity in your community.
- Do not allow your child to buy gang-style clothing.
- Discourage your child from "hanging out" with gang members or being in a gang.
- Organize families to rid your neighborhood of drugs and gang graffiti.
- Know where your child is and who he/she is with at all times.
- Report suspected gang or drug activity by calling 1-800-497-DARE.

Resources for Families and Schools

- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms: 1-800-ATF-GUNS
- Gang Suppression Hot Line: 1-800-78-CRIME
- Runaway Switchboard: 1-800-621-4000
- Teen Suicide Hotline: 1-800-522-TEEN
- Violence Prevention: 1-800-225-4276

Identifying Support Services**

- Knowing ***when*** to seek help and support is an important skill.
- Knowing ***where*** to turn for support can aid in obtaining needed assistance.
- Knowing ***how*** to access support systems can help overcome barriers in obtaining needed services.

Families may need to have access to information, support, and services for a number of reasons. They may have questions about their young adolescent's development; they may be concerned about their young adolescent's progress in school; they may suspect that their young adolescent is using drugs; they may be concerned about their young adolescent's choice of friends; or they may have a number of other concerns.

Being a parent can be a very difficult, stressful, and sometimes frustrating job. Many factors can increase the amount of stress a family is experiencing, including:

-moving to a new community
-handicap/disability
-lack of information (parenting, discipline)
-parents who are very young
-parents with low self-esteem
-alcohol/drug abuse
-health problems
-mental illness
-social isolation
-depression (their own or a family member's)
-unemployment or underemployment
-natural disasters (flood, tornado, hurricane)
-parents who were abused as a child
-divorce or blended family
-financial problems
-marital problems
-poverty
-loss of job

Families may not be aware of all the support systems and community resources that are available to them. As taxpayers and/or residents, they are entitled to assistance from many publicly supported agencies at the local, regional, state and national levels. As participants in the school system, they have access to school-based services. Simply as friends, members of families, neighborhoods, religious congregations, and communities, they are involved in informal or peer relationships that can offer support. Knowing where to turn, however, can be confusing. School personnel can help parents become aware of what resources are available to meet their particular needs.

Sources of support may include:

Church, synagogue, mosque, temple
Educational facilities
Friends
Immediate family
Neighbors
Networking organizations
Recreations, sports, leisure activities
Volunteer organizations
Professionals
Support groups
Work associates
Extended family
Clubs, social service
Spouse
Self
Special interest groups

**Adapted from "TOPS" (Training Ohio Parents for Success)

Identifying Support Barriers and Needs

Barriers to families seeking and/or getting support include:

ISOLATION: *I am alone and I am the only one who has felt like this.*

DENIAL OF DISABILITY: *My child will outgrow this.*

EXTREME SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY: *This is my responsibility. I am an adult; I should be able to handle it. No one else can do it but me.*

BELIEF THAT OTHERS DON'T WANT TO HELP: *Others don't want to be bothered. They don't really care. Others don't know enough to help, so I don't trust them.*

NEED TO BE A "PERFECT" PARENT: *I wanted these kids. I should adore and take care of them. I should be able to handle anything and everything.*

LACK OF ENERGY OR STRENGTH TO SEEK HELP: *It's too complicated to find and use a support system. It takes so much energy to explain my situation to others.*

UNSURE WHERE TO LOOK OR WHO TO BELIEVE: *I don't know where to turn.*

LACK OF INFORMATION: *I don't even know what questions to ask.*

LACK OF SELF-ESTEEM: *I asked for support and was rejected; I won't chance that again.*

FEAR OF REJECTION OR REFUSAL: *Even if I get my courage up, they'll just say "no."*

UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS: *I expect to get help and support without asking for it.* (Probably the single biggest obstacle in getting support.) The most difficult part of using the support network we have is ASKING! Most of us have a hard time expressing needs and wants clearly and specifically. We expect help, but others feel lost. They may want to offer support but fear offending our pride or independence. Others may have no idea how to approach us or what to do to help us.)

RESENTMENT: *Why do I have to "do it all"*. . learn about my child, be an advocate for my child, keep records, schedule and assume responsibility for asking for help and putting others at ease.

Family support needs include:

MORAL SUPPORT: someone to listen to dilemmas and concerns to be there – when you are worried, waiting, sad, or mad

COUNSELING: informal and formal

ENCOURAGEMENT: cheerleadi

RESPITE/CHILD CARE

PRACTICAL HELP: running errands, taking places, grocery shopping, etc.

Appendix: Six Types of Family Involvement

Appendix

Selected Strategies for Successful Programs.

The following family involvement strategies are categorized using the Loucks and Loucks (1990) model. Suggestions and examples listed resulted from conversations with school teams from across the country. This list is by no means exhaustive and should serve only as a catalyst for your own program strategies for improvement in family involvement. Comprehensive programs involve strategies from all six categories.

Type ONE: Family as *Decision Maker* and *Advocate.* Provides examples of families involved as decision makers and advocates for school maintenance and improvement.

1. Create councils for families to offer input into areas of concerns and school policies through curriculum advisory councils, school activity councils, family advisory groups and other organized groups. Develop a policy for family involvement in decision making roles. Outline a procedure whereby families can get involved in productive and effective ways.
2. Plan ways in which families can get involved in decision-making roles for activities that effect their child's life.
3. Locate a suggestion box or identify some manner in which families can voice their concerns and/or complaints.
4. Develop a district/school family involvement policy.
5. Create district support/recognition that family involvement is a necessary "District Mind-set."
6. Use families to develop strategies and enlist their support to pass bond issues and tax referendums.
7. Media approach to promote parenting: publicity (multi-media, newsletter, newspapers, fliers, TV [including local access cable channel], radio, posters).
   a. Simplified, selective messages to families – less is more. Identify what is important and deliver that message. Deliver once a week, color code them so families can identify and expect them. (Use gimmicks to get students to take them home.
   b. Focus of family involvement should be on student learning/achievement.
   c. Use school newsletter to establish expectations. (it is best to mail them home if possible)
   d. Have teachers issue regular notes to families, possibly at three and six week intervals with specific areas to be addressed (one positive note for each negative note.)

e. Place a telephone in each classroom or teachers' work area for ease of communicating with families.

f. Use an assignment sheet or notebook kept by students and sent home each night. Communication can be two-way: notes to and from families/teachers through notebooks (families know these are to be completed daily).

g. Phone calls to families to communicate positive messages.

8. Hold PTA activities and conferences at flexible times to accommodate families' work schedules.
9. Provide a bulletin board in family workroom or entry hall for family meetings or for volunteer opportunities.
10. Provide families with opportunities to serve on committees, boards, and/or as advisory council members.
11. Develop and provide Legislative Action training for families.

Type TWO: Family and School as *Communicators*. Two-way communication consists of strategies for encouraging clear two-way communication between the school and the home.

1. Schedule parent/student conferences regularly and provide instruction to staff on how to make conferences valuable and non-threatening. Role play with inexperienced faculty members. Describe the procedures of the family conference in a note to familiarize the families with what to expect at the conference. The child is the focus of the conference and the goal is to determine how the family and school can work together as partners to assure academic progress.
2. Make frequent phone calls and/or send notes home regularly. Suggest that two positive calls/notes be made for every negative/corrective call or note. Include a time when families are most likely to find teachers at school.
3. Give families handbooks that clearly state classroom/school policies and procedures. Ask families to sign and return a sheet that states that they have read and discussed the contents of the material with their child. Provide opportunity for families and students to give input.
4. Respond promptly to all family requests for information.
5. Provide special information sessions at various times to assist families with clear guidelines and information about events such as science fairs or class trips.
6. Sponsor a new student/family school orientation at the beginning of each year. Make provisions for mini-orientations at other times of the year for families who have moved into the district.
7. Develop a policy that encourages families to visit the school and classrooms. Take special care to ensure that all staff, including secretaries and maintenance people, understand they are in the service business. A smile and helping hand can go a long way in keeping the doors of communication open.

8. Make home visits whenever possible. Train staff in dos and don'ts of successful home visits.
9. Create special opportunities for families to visit the school, observe classrooms, and ask questions after the visit. Friday coffee with the principal; family, grandparents, or school critical friend lunches are possible events that bring families into the school.
10. Use the local media to keep the public informed.
11. Remember, your greatest advertisement is contented and satisfied students. When students are successful and happy at their school, families are pleased and will more likely support the school.
12. Encourage families to share information about their child. Schools can learn much by being listeners, not just information givers.
13. Make all communications easy, simple, direct. Keep in mind that many families may have language barriers both because of literacy or lack of knowledge of the English language. Use pictures, short words and whenever needed, translations. Know your audience. When referring to the family remember that there are all types of families: single family, step-family, foster, blended, multi-generational.
14. Meet with families on the first day of school and establish mutual responsibility and expectations – request family members complete survey (special interests/ help to school etc.). This information will allow families to become immediately involved.
15. One-on-one is the most powerful approach; so create many opportunities to meet families as individuals.
16. Create report card pick-up system (to receive first report card, family must pick it up) and participate in a student/teacher/family conference at that time.
17. Offer family/teacher conferences into evening or before school hours for working families. Offer alternatives for those who cannot attend these regular dates/times.(Provide baby sitters for siblings.)
18. Provide compensation for teachers to come on Saturdays to meet with families.
19. Use a "Home Folder" – a special folder that goes home regularly with homework, notes, and graded papers. The student must return the folder the next morning.
20. Use "Teacher/Family Grams" – Share good news and concerns with the family and leave space for the family's response.
21. Send a welcome letter to students before school starts.
22. Display welcome signs for families both inside and outside the school.
23. Provide family suggestion boxes.
24. Provide informal luncheons or a coffee hour with principal by invitation.
25. Provide open invitations to lunch and visits to the program.

Type THREE: Family as *Learners*. Contains suggestions for schools to assist families in becoming knowledgeable about child development, nutrition, discipline, and overall child rearing.

1. Place a table, bulletin board, or rack where families can pick up and read materials that can assist them in learning how to help their adolescents in school or ways to improve their parenting skills. Groups like the national associations of mathematics and reading teachers, the national PTA, and many others have free or inexpensive brochures that are very informative for families.
2. Sponsor workshops for families on how to improve their (1) parenting skills, (2) discipline techniques, (3) communication with their child, (4) knowledge about AIDS, drug abuse, Algebra 1, or a host of other subjects. These can be taught by the school social worker, psychologist, a classroom teacher, or a family volunteer.
3. Provide a video library where parents can check out informational tapes and/or school-made tapes with instructions on such areas as how to help with special projects, homework, or preparation for tests.
4. Establish a lending library of books for families. Include books and magazines with articles about child development, nutrition, and other related topics.
5. In newsletters, provide tips for families on how to improve their parenting skills in such areas as setting homework schedules, bedtimes and nutrition guidelines.
6. Provide a place and time when families can meet in small groups to discuss common parenting concerns. Families of children experiencing difficulty may be specifically targeted for conversations in which the school counselor or social worker serves as facilitator.
7. Provide non-school settings in which to reach and talk with families. Hosting meetings in housing projects, churches, YMCA and social centers may encourage participation of reluctant families.
8. Schedule non-threatening activities that are attuned to the social, emotional, physical, and educational needs of the families.
9. Enlist the aid of bilingual key communicators for non-English speaking families. Provide appropriate English as a second language programs or alter learning experiences which have been traditionally available only in English. Look for the assets and strengths of each family and build on those. Families are powerful teachers of other families.
10. Provide information booklets or hold a workshop for families about school and inform families of how important they are in the education of children.
11. Provide after-school programs for "latch key" students that the parents "pay for" by attending a certain number of parenting classes.
12. Make a video of a typical classroom day available for families to view in the family resource room or to check out.

13. Establish a family picture bulletin board showing families and their children engaging in school related activities.
14. Survey families on topics, date, and time preferred for family meetings.
15. Provide a special family/team meeting for parents of students entering the middle school.
16. Provide information about upcoming continuing education classes.
17. Coordinate family-to-family meetings in which leadership lies with the families rather than school personnel.

Type FOUR: Family as *Teachers/Coaches*. Consists of ways in which families can serve as teacher or coach. Families are the child's first teacher and their continued commitment to support the learning process is important to each child's school success.

1. Suggest that families read to and with their child(ren) on a regular basis. Establish a "Read at Home" (RAH) Program. Families and their children pledge to read books together. Token rewards may be given as incentives.
2. Develop a calendar of events of seasonal activities, places to visit, and things to do for families and young adolescents. Include activities that promote family-child interaction that is unhurried and pleasant for both.
3. Suggest that families take young adolescent children to the library regularly. Send home a recommended, age-appropriate reading list to target good books.
4. Provide a family/child suggested TV viewing list with an occasional assignment for family/child discussion after viewing a particular program.
5. Illustrate ways families can assist with systematic reviews of school subjects such as spelling practice or math drills.
6. Where needed and appropriate provide a formal agreement between families and the school for the family supervision of or assistance with homework.
7. Use other families as teachers of families (providing training)
8. Invite families to join in field trips and send home pre- and post-trip discussion questions.
9. Send home suggestions about school related activities to do at home and in the community. (Homework sheets, incentives – positive behavior, and calendar of activities.)
10. Family recap time – suggest that families and their children share the activities of the day.
11. Provide a list of learning activities and projects plus a reading list to encourage learning.
12. Implement an at-home reading program such as "Book It" (a reading incentive program sponsored by Pizza Hut).
13. Offer a "Make-it and Take-it" workshop where families make games they can play with their children at home and then share them.

14. Establish a school-wide, 15 minute per night reading requirement. Publicize highly to ensure participation.
15. Hold a reading, math, or science fair for families at school where projects are displayed and explained by the students.
16. Send home a monthly or quarterly Family Packet to each family in the school. The packet should include ideas for activities at home, informational articles, and announcements.
17. Encourage families to establish a special place and time at home where the young adolescent can study.
18. Provide a session in which test data is explaned for each grade level or team.
19. Set up a homework hotline.
20. Create homework that involves family members as data sources, reactors, or active participants.

Type FIVE: Family as *Supporters, Volunteers,* and *Audience.* The most common types of family involvement refer to families as supporters (those who raise funds and work at school events), families as volunteers (those who assist in various ways both in the school and on field trips), and families as audience (those who attend school events and performances).

1. Survey families at the beginning of each year to identify ways in which they would like to help at the school. Place in groups (for example: library helpers, field trip sponsors, room families, computer aids). Provide training and guidelines. Note: Sample survey is located on p. 95. DO NOT survey families unless you plan to follow up on all responses.
2. Host an orientation session for each type of volunteer group. At that meeting establish conditions for volunteer participation. Provide a handbook when possible that includes the guidelines as well as other helpful information. Also solicit leadership from the group so that it can function without the administrator's constant guidance. The leader from each volunteer group could then make up a volunteer council or care committee which could meet regularly to deal with concerns or changes needed.
3. Plan recognition and rewards for ALL families who volunteer or provide other forms of support such as baked goods. Having a *sign-in* procedure will help to recognize all volunteers. Certificates, a "Thank You" lunch provided by staff, a holiday tea, and names on a special bulletin board are ways of recognizing their efforts, no matter how small, and expressing appreciation.
4. Provide ways to identify volunteers when in school such as a name tag or special "I'm a volunteer" pin. These add prestige to the job.
5. Provide child care when possible. Make an arrangement with area high schools or community college child care programs to provide these services. Both your school and the students will benefit. For after school activities use scouts, student council, or other groups who need service credits.

6. Provide a place in the school where adult visitors and volunteers can congregate, have coffee, and work together. If space is a problem, solicit support from the staff to share the teachers' lounge.
7. Provide working families an opportunity to provide support through offering Saturday or take-home projects such as painting games on black top, cutting out materials, and building backdrops for a play. Build your volunteer program on the premise that most families have the desire and ability to help in some way.
8. Take plenty of photos/videos and provide news coverage of all events and families in action. These serve as a strong testimonial and aid in recruitment of more volunteers.
9. Plan at least one way each month to show volunteers how much they are appreciated. Possibilities include: providing a pot luck, refreshments, certificates, letters of thanks, and names in the paper or newsletter For special events include families names in large hearts (February) saying "Thanks to the sweethearts of _____ school" or outline hands and put a volunteer's name on each hand. Develop a bulletin board with the title "Many Hands Make Light Work!" which displays hands. The display could be shaped like a tree in December.
10. Make opportunities available so all students can experience having their family as parts of an audience. Avoid programs that feature only the "stars."
    Examples:
    (a) Schedule more talent shows, or talent*less* shows,
    (b) Academic improvement events,
    (c) School plays,
    (d) Intramural athletic events,
    (e) Thematic unit culminating activities
11. Enlist families as volunteer aides, e.g., reading to students, one-on-one tutor, etc.
12. Provide special events that require family participation: read-along night, game night, science fair workshop, creative writing workshop, or multicultural night.
13. Encourage families and community representatives (e.g. art association) to help with behind-the scenes projects, cutting, making costumes, and stapling.
14. Provide numerous social events, e.g. school picnics, spaghetti dinners, talent shows, fall fests, etc.
15. Pass out bumper stickers reading, "I'm a family volunteer." "(School name) is great!" "Families and schools as partners!"
16. Provide family support groups.
17. Provide families with ways they can serve as room families.
18. Provide a Grandparent Recognition Day.
19. Include community and business partners on committees.
20. Develop a community "buddy" program for at risk students. Many civic clubs have improving education as their goal – ask them for assistance.

Type SIX: Family, School and Community as *Partners*. Consists of suggestions for how families can collaborate with the school and community by (1) showing interest in adolescent child safety and health (2) providing services and learning resources (3) encouraging school attendance, and (4) utilizing human resources.

1. Send or mail home newsletters informing families of classroom activities. Students can write the team newsletters.
2. Send home 'tip sheets which suggest ways in which families can better support their young adolescent's academic performance and/or school attendance. Example:
    a. Five ways to have fewer homework tears;
    b. Television viewing guidelines;
    c. Ten reasons to read with or to your child;
    d. A monthly calendar or seasonal calendar of things families could be doing together. This could include visiting local sites of interest such as the public library and making something.
    e. Homework assignments that encourage or even require family and child to discuss, share, or work together.
    f. Homework and study procedures;
    g. Homework Hotline;
    h. A safe walk/ride night for students and family members (possibly in conjunction with open house). Encourage families to walk or ride to school with their young adolescent and discuss safety rules;
    i. Frequent opportunities for families to utilize their skills and talents with students by sharing hobbies, life experiences, travels, and career information;
    j. Problem solving strategies for families: A three-way conference among teacher, family, and child is often more successful. The child has the problem (low grades, poor behavior, etc.) the teacher and the family can collaborate to help find a way to assist the child in resolving the problem.
3. Engage senior citizen programs, outreach programs, e.g., Golden Card, (reduced admission to events), Pen Pals, provide meals on special occasions, grandparent/good friend tea, etc.
4. Solicit local businesses to give released time for families to be involved in their child's education and/or provide technical resources.
5. Set up a "Guests Read a Book" (GRAB) program. Families, including grandparents, or community representatives bring their favorite books to read aloud to classes.
6. Suggest to families that they and their children set aside a specific time (one hour) for homework each night. Call it "The Power Hour" and initiate a community marketing plan using posters, advertisements, and buttons stressing the importance of homework and The Power Hour program.

7. Give awards and recognition for achievement, improved behavior, attendance, etc. ensuring every student during the year receives some award.
8. Set up car-pooling activities.
9. Plan Community/Family appreciation days.
10. Develop a VIP (very important person) Awards Program for special contributions.
11. Provide a Family Fair (vendors and social service agencies) with presentations.
12. Provide child care with hands-on activities for children while families learn.
13. Develop a community resource directory, solicit clubs and other community groups for assistance. Schools can always use resource persons to enhance lessons.
14. Collaborate with human services agencies in coordinating student and family assistance.

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National Middle School Association
2600 Corporate Exchange Drive,
Suite 370
Columbus, Ohio 43231
1-800-528-NMSA

ISBN 1-56090-124-1

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